

SENRI AKATSUKI  
明月千里

●春日步 AYEMU KASUGA

IMPERIAL CHRONICLE  
BAKONOGI

相馬最弱  
大敗  
魔道取引  
の巻

13



# Novel Illustrations





今ここに、  
世界を守る最後の砦が再臨した。



# Prologue – The Princess's Awakening

## Part 1

「U..... umu?」

A sense of fatigue was enveloping the girl's body like a membrane.

In one day she could only wake up for a few hours. She would lightly eat things like soup, go to toilet, and then she would sleep like a log again.

Few days passed when even the flow of time became hazy. She was still sleeping deeply.

And then, one day, Lisha suddenly woke up in a snap and sprang up from the bed.

Pure white wallpaper that gave off a clean impression and the smell of antiseptic and medicinal plants were filling the small room.

「This place is the Academy's medical room—no, the relief room? Since when did I.....!」

When she looked on the room's mirror, her familiar face was reflected.

The girl with crimson eyes and the side tail of her blonde hair untied was the princess of the New Kingdom, Lizsharte.

After the battle against Dragon Marauder, she recalled waking up once with a clear mind.

But, after confirming everyone's safety and the incident also reached a point where they could pause, the next day after Soffice's welcoming party Lisha collapsed from exhaustion.

Her memory from there was terribly hazy and she couldn't recall anything.

「What was I doing!? What day is today!? What happened with the New Years parade!?」

After yelling in her sleepwear, Lisha stood up and she was going to rush out of the room.

But, when her hand reached towards the doorknob, at that instant the door opened first and a girl showed herself.

It was Lisha's classmate and a member of the raid squad, Syvalles.

The overseas student from the Ymir Theocracy, Krulcifer Xfer.

「I'm relieved that you look energetic, for someone who was mostly just sleeping every day that is.」

「Krulcifer!? Why are you here!? No, how many days have I been sleeping you say?」

Lisha's eyes opened wide in puzzlement. In response, Krulcifer let out a short sigh and brushed up her hair coolly.

After urging Lisha to return to her bed for the time being, she faced her and began to talk.

「I heard about your victory from the Triad. Over Unit that clad general purpose Drag-Rides on a Divine Drag-Ride—with that you defeated the commanders of Dragon Marauder. That was magnificent.」

Krulcifer showed a smile that looked somewhat conflicted.

「However, you weren't accustomed to it and forced yourself. If you used multiple Drag-Rides combined with a Divine Drag-Ride at the same time, your stamina and mental strength will be exhausted several times faster than normal. That excessive burden assaulted you the moment you relaxed yourself.」



「.....」

In other words, she would die if she made a single mistake—that was what Krulcifer was saying.

Thinking about it, Lisha's spine felt a chill.

「But, in that situation there was no other way than that.....」

「I guess.」

Krulcifer also honestly agreed to Lisha's powerless murmur.

「Leaving everything to you alone in that situation was our responsibility. That's why, there is no need for you to feel remorse.」

「What do you mean by that? Don't tell me, you are saying that I was inadequate—」

Lisha thought that Krulcifer was being sarcastic and she immediately flared up.

But, seeing Krulcifer's dejected expression, she noticed that it was a misunderstanding.

「That's not it. I'm vexed with our overconfidence in our own strength. The simultaneous explosions by Oil Slimes, we made light of the strategy of Dragon Marauder's Drakken, which invited such blunder.」

The perfectionist Krulcifer felt ashamed of that.

But, the battle at that time was an absurd one where they were facing Dragon Marauders and a Ragnarok at the same time, so as expected that wasn't something that could be helped.

Even so, Krulcifer couldn't be satisfied with just that.

「Fuh」

Lisha who guessed Krulcifer's thinking smiled bitterly.

「So is this what you mean? We still have a way to go from how we were mutually conceited of our own strength.」

「Yes, let's be more diligent. So that we won't worry a certain someone who is

even more reckless than us.]

That was really just like Krulcifer. Lisha too didn't hate that kind of greed which hated to lose.

It would be even better if she also didn't try to take away Lux, but Lisha put that aside for now.

The moment they reached a point to pause in regards to the events until now, Lisha suddenly became curious about the surroundings.

「However, although the new year has just come, the Academy ground is really quiet. The class should be starting soon though— what is Lux doing?」

「About that, you see, it looks like you are quite well already now, so perhaps it's fine to tell you.」

Lisha tilted her head in puzzlement hearing that. In response Krulcifer suddenly changed her tone.

From a gentle and soft tone, to a voice that was tinged faintly with tension.

「.....Did something happen? I remember until Lux departing to the Marcafal Kingdom along with the Seven Dragon Paladins in order to conquer Avalon, but—」

That's right.

With the battle the other day that was connected to Soffice Xfer, all the Grand Forces became complete and the path to conquer Avalon could finally be seen.

A lot of ancient technologies and legacies were sleeping in Avalon, If they could reach to the deepest part at the center, Sacred Eclipse—the last Ragnarok that would guide the world to destruction could possibly be stopped.

With that, the world would finally be saved.

It was ascertained that Avalon was located in the Marcafal Kingdom's abandoned capital, Guernica. The captain of the Seven Dragon Paladins, Magialca had been making preparations since long ago. She gathered the elite Drag-Knights of the world alliance and took position there.

She arranged supply trains to the fortress that was near the old castle where Avalon seemed to be located, and called the Seven Dragon Paladins to gather.

Until seven days ago when Lisha lost consciousness, the remaining Ruins shouldn't have been liberated yet.

「While you are sleeping, the two Ruins were liberated. Ymir Theocracy's Hall, and then the New Kingdom's Garden too.」

「I see, with that—」

「However, the one who achieved that in both Ruins were the Lords you see.」

「.....-!？」

The Ruins' capture was managed by the rulers of the ancient era, the Lords, so if it was just that then it wasn't an affair that was particularly strange.

But, Lisha felt something strangely out of place.

「They estranged themselves from the World Alliance. And then, they announced the situation of the world that had been hidden until now to the people of each country, including the matter of Sacred Eclipse.」

「—What did you say?」

Lisha was taken aback by the sentence that Krulcifer said in succession.

「Thinking back now, they surely intended to do that from the start. They formed a pact with us until now was only until the path to Avalon was opened. It's really troublesome. But now they have no more need for that.」

「Shit-! Those damn ungrateful bunch! After making use of us, they stole a march and intend to monopolize the legacies and technologies of the ancient era by themselves!?」

This happened just after she thought they had safely reconciled with the traitor Soffice.

While Lisha gritted her teeth on the bed, Krulcifer took a deep breath.

「Unfortunately, those people aren't that kind. While you were sleeping, what the Lords did—」

The expression of Krulcifer who was always composed was even showing fear.

Lisha who sensed that out of the ordinary atmosphere repressed her rage and asked.

「What in the world happened?」

「They showed a stance of monopoly not in regards to Avalon.」

‘Fuu’, Krulcifer let out a sigh while brushing up her blue hair with uneasiness mixed in her movement.

「Their aim is to purge all the royalties and nobles, that is to say all the present rulers of this world—a reorganization of the very structure of this world.」

「—!？」

Lisha shuddered hearing those unexpected words.

And then Krulcifer calmly continued her story.

The happening in every part of the world that occurred during the few days while Lisha was unconscious.

The scheme of the Lords, their terrifying plan.

## Part 2

Seven days ago from Lisha's awakening.

The New Kingdom Atismata, the royal capital Lordgalia.

Inside the royal castle—the audience hall.

The case of Soffice's betrayal was settled. The inside of the castle was enveloped with an atmosphere that was slightly relaxed. At that time, an emergency messenger tore apart such atmosphere.

「Pardon me! Your majesty! Strange figures of people are starting puzzling speeches in various places within the country! The result from Drake's detection ascertained that they are the Abyss called Shadows disguising themselves as human! Those Abyss are only spreading words, so there is no damage at all to the people and Drag-Knights but—」

The content of the information that the Drag-Knight soldier reported caused everyone there, Queen Raffi and the chief vassals of the New Kingdom, to frown.

「The incident that happened until the other day and the war council for capturing Avalon after this caused her majesty to be very busy. You all should be the ones to deal with the trifling matters within the country.」

The prime minister who was still young with an intellectual look, Nulph said that, but the messenger soldier didn't lift his face.

He continued to talk with trembling voice while keeping his kneeling posture.

「A, as you say but.....the number of Abyss making a speech isn't normal. And, the contents of their speech is also a problem.」

「Problem you say? Just what are they saying? If the citizens are told delusional words from the Abyss, there won't be any problem no matter what they say.」

「N, no, those Abyss, they are speaking of a terrible matter—」

When the soldier lifted up his pale face, the door was slowly opened and someone entered.

「Who are you!? You are in the presence of the queen—!?」

Prime Minister Nulph raised his voice towards the sudden intruder, but he stopped midway.

The face of the intruder caused him to turn speechless spontaneously.

「You, if I'm not mistaken—!?」

「-.....you are!?」

After Nulph, Queen Raffi also held her breath.

The one who appeared in the audience hall was a girl wearing a pure white dress.

No, what was white wasn't just the dress.

Her skin that was like fresh snow without even a single dot of cloudiness, and radiant silver hair that looked as though powdered snow was scattered on it.

Her mismatched eyes had the color of gray at the left, and faintly blazing scarlet at the right.

That transcendental presence which was out of the human realm affected not just the chief vassals, even Nulph and Raffi were also unable to make any voice.

「How do you do, my name is Listelka Rei Arshalia. The Lords—an imperial family member of the ancient era, a descendant of the Holy Arcadia Empire, the one managing all the Ruins in this world.」

「Wha.....!?」

「That is, her highness Listelka.....? Why is she here!?」

The chief vassals who heard that looked at each other's face in shock.

The top of the Lords, Listelka Rei Arshalia. Her existence wasn't known by the people, but the chief vassals of each country were told of her.

Why did she suddenly appear here and introduced herself?

What was going on? What was she saying?

While such confusion was spreading to everyone there, Prime Minister Nulph returned to his senses.

「Wha, what is the guards doing!? There is an intruder there!」

「I, it's that! The Abyss that mimicked humans and appeared everywhere to make a speech!」

「What.....!?」

The messenger soldier raised his voice at the same time with Nulph's instruction.

The guards summoned their Drag-Rides and stood in front of the queen.

But, the Abyss didn't look bothered at all and simply continued its words.

「Originally I planned to give my greeting a little bit quicker, but I also have my own situation. Well, the consuls of the New Kingdom and Queen Raffi seemed to be hiding it, but the Queen cannot be blamed about it. After all it is surely inconvenient for her—the existence of this me, the legitimate ruler of this world.」

「Wha, what is it saying!?」

「Don't speak as you please, you insolent fellow!」

「It's pointless. Stop it.」

The chief vassals were making angry voices, but they were stopped by Nulph.

This wasn't Listelka herself who was currently speaking. The Abyss called Shadow that was mimicking her appearance was only one-sidedly transmitting the speech.

「We are the imperial family of the ancient era who once ruled this world. Whether it is the Old Empire or the New Kingdom, or every other country, they hid our existence and deceived all of you to stand at the top.」

The girl—no, the Abyss mimicking Listelka fluently continued its speech.

A beautiful and striking voice was gently resounding in the audience hall.

「But, we are standing on the front stage once more to act as the ruler of all of you as before. There is no need to fear. It is only the royalties and nobles who we, the Lord are choosing as the target of punishment. We won't lay our hands on the people who possess no military strength. Thus—」

Inside Listelka's graceful smile, a shadow was mixed like a drop of poison.

「Those who wish to proclaim themselves as innocent people, please come forward and announce yourself at once. Throw away your Drag-Rides and take distance from the royalties and nobles, shut out and isolate them. We will massacre those who are holding weapons, the people who are continuing to rule with the absolute armed might called Drag-Rides.」

「Wha—!？」

The chief vassals opened their eyes wide altogether and raised a shocked voice.

That was a clear provocation that was just too blatant.

A political declaration to steal power from royalties and nobles and isolated them.

Furthermore Listelka continued to say that at the dawn when the ruling class was purged, she would stop the activities of the Abyss, abolish all taxes and conscription, and granted the people freedom.

「—Ridiculous! This is disgusting!」

「There is no citizen in our country who will swallow this kind of nonsense.」

「Your majesty! Please give your command to exterminate these Abyss within our country!」

The chief vassals who were raging furiously spoke one after another, but Queen Raffi silently shook her head.

「That's—not possible.」

Queen Raffi spoke with a sorrowful expression.

「At present, we are gathering our forces in the Marcafal Kingdom in order to capture Avalon. In this situation, even if we borrow the strength of the Four

Great Nobles, we won't be able to even maintain the public order of the capital.]

In other words, they couldn't split their forces to exterminate the Abyss called Shadow that were only making speeches.

They could only endure it at this time, but even then a part of the retainers appealed doggedly.

「While presumptuous allow me to speak! Although it's just nonsense, if this kind of false rumor is repeated everywhere, everyday, before long it will become an embellished rumor. There is no way we cannot let the foundation of the New Kingdom get taken away! The extermination of the Abyss have to be done as fast as—」

「Didn't you hear her majesty's words? She is saying that we cannot do that!」

The prime minister Nulph rebuked loudly. That place fell silent.

Nulph gave instructions to the guards wearing Drag-Rides in regard to Listelka who was starting to repeat the same speech.

After a Drag-Knight pierced the Core with his Blade, the Abyss collapsed without resistance, turned into ash, and crumbled.

「It's a cheap provocation. Besides, her majesty has the support of the people. There is no need to worry that they will be manipulated by Abyss nonsense.」

「Perhaps, so.」

Raffi nodded at Nulph's advice and swallowed the sigh that she was about to leak out.

Either way they had no way to interfere with this at present, so she could only think that.

Perhaps a part of the chief vassals had guilty feelings of pointlessly spending tax, because they were eager to regain their honor, but there was no time for such thing.

But, thought Raffi.

If there was still another trap lurking behind that speech which was using the

Abyss called Shadow.

If Listelka Rei Arshalia was seriously trying to change the current ruling structure, it might not end with just this.

「.....As I thought, perhaps this is too heavy of a burden. Being a replacement for my elder brother the great man, for me it's—」

Queen Raffi's monologue wasn't heard by anyone other than Prime Minister Nulph who was standing at her side. That voice was swallowed into the tumult of the audience hall that was starting to be noisy and vanished.

—

And then, half a day later, an even more terrifying notice came from the Lords.

The capture of the Seven Dragon Paladins by the Lords.

There was a demand for negotiation with them as hostages.

In case the representatives didn't show up at the Marcafal Kingdom within the next twelve days, the Seven Dragon Paladins would be executed.

## Part 3

「Impossible— there was something like that while I was sleeping!?」

Lisha who finished listening to Krulcifer clenched her fist and shook in rage.

Even now Shadows that were mimicking Listelka continued their speeches in various places, and the nobles of the New Kingdom were starting to feel uncomfortable.

Furthermore, because the Shadows also talked about the matter of Sacred Eclipse, the students of the Academy also seemed to be dispirited.

The usual liveliness didn't exist because of that.

「That means, is there also one in this Cross Field, that Abyss which is representing the Lords?」

「There is but, calm down a little.」

Lisha lost her temper while still in her sleepwear. Besides her, Krulcifer admonished her calmly.

「You think I can calm down like this!? It's not just about Lux and the others who are captured, the very existence of the New Kingdom itself is in danger!」

「That's why I'm telling you to calm down. The enemy's aim is to make the situation unable to be ignored by all means like that.」

「What do you mean.....?」

Lisha made a questioning face. The blue haired girl straightened her back in response.

「If you don't feel anything strange after hearing that the Seven Dragon Paladins were captured, then it seems that you still aren't in a perfect state. Your brain shouldn't be that bad you know? The you as a commander that is.」

「Muu.....」

Krulcifer's cool words caused Lisha to think once more.

The abandoned capital of the Marcafal Kingdom, Guernica.

In order to capture Avalon, the elite squads of the world alliance took position there as their base.

The Seven Dragon Paladins there were rounded up by the Lords.

Right after Lux arrived there after receiving a summon, and easily at that.

「Certainly it's strange..... Lux, those Seven Dragon Paladins bunch, for them to be that easily captured—」

Certainly, Lisha understood that they weren't almighty against every kind of situation.

Situations where they were taken by surprise before they could wear their Divine Drag-Rides or something, naturally it was possible that they were done in at such special circumstances.

Those people should have countermeasures too so that such things wouldn't happen, but if the report that they were captured was the truth, then there was no doubt that the Lords had prepared in advance and suppressed the Seven Dragon Paladins.

「Yes, but there is a point that is even more baffling than that. Why didn't they get rid of the Seven Dragon Paladins? Even though they are the greatest fighting force of the world alliance.」

「.....!？」

Lisha was taken aback by what Krulcifer pointed out.

There were several reasons to spare the battle strength that was stolen from the enemy, but in this situation the biggest reason she could think of was—

「Because we are still remaining, is that it.....？」

「That possibility is high. The Abyss called Shadow were scattered in an especially larger number inside the New Kingdom. Considering that—」

A lot of Divine Drag-Ride users were gathered in Syvalles of Cross Field in the New Kingdom.

If the Lords used their greatest ace and obtained the cards called the Seven Dragon Paladins, they should want to use that and deal with Lisha and co. too beforehand.

The capture of Avalon that still hadn't been liberated yet.

In order so that there wouldn't be the slightest chance that the greatest wish of the Lords would be taken away from them.

「That bunch was advancing the preparation of agitation tactic using Shadows in order to divert our attention and take away our composure—is it okay to consider it like that?」

「In the end it's only our conjecture though. They might be serious about this reorganization of ruling structure too. But, even if that isn't the case, if they continue the incitement of the people for too long, they wouldn't be able to avoid the worsening of impressions towards them. In the little chance that an uprising occurs, they will get stuck with needing to split their forces.」

「In any case, from the enemy's point of view it is an effective strategy huh.」

To continuously give orders to the Abyss and made them carry out a complex assault, a continuous command from a horn flute was necessary.

But, regarding the Shadows in question, they would only earnestly do repeatedly the command that they had been made to remember, so it didn't take much effort.

Even if the Lord's subordinates and collaborators were few in number, it was possible for them to execute this plan.

「Yosh! In that case, our job is one. Staying alert so that those Lord bunch won't get the jump on us and rescuing Lux—no, all the Seven Dragon Paladins!」

When Lisha clenched her fist tightly, Krulcifer smiled.

「Yes, we had come to such agreement. Celis-senpai and Philuffy have already departed for the Marcafal Kingdom early this morning.」

「—Wait, what did you say!?」

Lisha, who was full of motivation, was dumbfounded after hearing that sentence.

「What's with that!? Going ahead like that while leaving behind this me who is the Princess of the New Kingdom!」

「It couldn't be helped. The countdown of twelve days from the Lord's threat has started, and we will also need time to investigate the enemy. Besides, they had only left for half a day, so if we go now we will be able to link up with them.」

Krulcifer smoothly explained like that.

「If I'm to speak my true feelings, I also wanted Yoruka, who possesses a special equipment type Divine Drag-Ride, Yato no Kami, to accompany us, but her treatment is still not over. At this time we can only ask her to stay in the Academy with the Triad and come along after us later.」

「I see now.....」

Lisha took a deep breath several times and repressed her impatient feeling.

It seemed that was the best they could do in this current situation.

She had the wish to save Lux even for a second faster, but she mustn't be too hurried and blundered.

The New Kingdom's—no, the world's fate was in the hands of Lisha and the others after all.

「Then let's go Krulcifer! We'll depart from the Academy three hours later! Finish your preparations until then!」

「I can go anytime. After all it's not just you who is reining in the feeling of wanting to go save him right away.」

Krulcifer responded to Lisha's voice and concluded the talk.

Right at that timing, the door was knocked and Tillfur's voice came.

「'Sup. How is Lisha-sama doing?」

Lisha asked the Triad who came for a visit to bring her pilot suit here, then she took off her sleepwear in a flash and began to change.

「Good grief. Even though the Princess finally woke up, there isn't any time to give thanks for the battle the other day huh.」

The oldest person there, Sharis made a smile that looked somewhat troubled.

「Yes. But, it also can be said that it's just like Lisha-sama.」

Noct said with her usual calm tone and expression.

「We will leave the rest to all of you. When Yoruka wakes up, we will also come to back you guys!」

Tillfur showed a bright smile to encourage them.

Lisha made a light arrangement with the Triad to send a letter to Queen Raffi, then she got carried by Krulcifer's Fafnir and departed to the Marcafal Kingdom.

After seeing them off from the Academy's courtyard, the Triad looked at each other's faces.

「They are gone.....」

Noct muttered while looking up at the sky with a lonely gaze.

It was also the same at the incident of attack by Hayes and Dragon Marauder previously, but as expected they were left in the dust by those girls when it was crucial.

They weren't displeased by that.

Sharis, whose father was the deputy commander of the New Kingdom's military, naturally knew that the logistics wouldn't hold with just the powerful soldiers, and Tillfur and Noct also knew that.

But, that was that. They still had feelings of vexation within them.

They had no time to inform Lisha, but they had finally become able to use their new strength, that she had granted them, well.

「We will also rush there.....is it, will our strength be useful against opponents that easily captured the Seven Dragon Paladins?」

「What what, Sharis is getting cold feet? Isn't it too late already to be bothered about that kinda thing now?」

「Yes. Tillfur who said that seems to be trembling as well though?」

「Wai-, that's not true! This is just because of the cold I'm telling you!」

「Ha-ha-ha. Say that it's trembling from excitement even if you've to lie. That excuse is uncool, you know?」

Sharis who was watching the conversation of Tillfur and Noct smiled.

Even if they piled up effort trying to catch up, their difference with those girls only got wider.

Even so they weren't just being bothered by a sense of inferiority.

The three of them believed that there would be a time when their strength was going to be necessary.

That was why they suppressed their impatience and silently waited for Yoruka to wake up.

In order to head together with her to rescue Lux.

## Part 4

Around that time when Lisha and Krulcifer departed from the New Kingdom.

In the Marcafal Kingdom, at the abandoned capital Guernica.

The sky above the ruin that was colored dull grey.

In the battlefield between the fortress where the world alliance took position and the old castle, the Abyss and Drag-Knights were flying around.

The shooting sound of Cannon, the sound of a sword fight of Blade, and the sound of air shaking from Howling Howl were resounding intermittently.

The Heaven Palace that was floating in the sky above—the chalk white airborne ship that was a legacy of the ancient era just like the Ruins was looking down on the battlefield with the Lords inside.

Inside the control room of the ship was the Holy Arcadia Empire's first imperial princess, Listelka Rei Arshalia.

The shrine maiden of oracle who was able to hold correspondence with Avalon and made use of a portion of its power.

Her skin, hair, dress, everything was pure white. She was a girl with beauty that was outside the human realm.

In addition, there was the loyal maid with blue hair, the Key's Supervisor, Mishis V Xfer.

And then, someone was kneeling in front of Listelka. Fugil Arcadia.

He was once the first imperial prince of the Arcadia Empire, an elder brother of Lux.

「We are having more trouble than I thought. I learned that an army will collapse as long as their head is taken away is the established theory of the battlefield though—？」

Listelka sent a glance at Fugil and smiled wryly.

For Listelka and the others, the Lords, the Seven Dragon Paladins and the elite force taking position in front of the old castle were a nuisance.

In order to reach Avalon, the cooperation of the world alliance was necessary.

In order to slip through the threat of Sacred Eclipse, conquer the Ruins, and defeat all the remaining Ragnarok, the Lords had no choice but to borrow their strength.

But—setting that aside, the Lords didn't have any intention to share the ancient legacies and technologies of Avalon with them from the start.

For Listelka, the Lord was the sole absolute ruler.

Although few in number, there were also relatives of the Lords sleeping inside hibernation pods, waiting to be awakened.

Due to that, it was impossible that she who was a pure imperial family member would humor the world alliance and share authority with them.

They who suffered damage from the family of traitors, decreased in number, and had their ruling position threatened wouldn't possibly yield the chance to reign over the world once more.

Thus, she sent her little sister—Aeril to infiltrate the enemy alliance as a spy, tricking the Seven Dragon Paladins and captured them.

In addition she would purge the royalties and nobles all over the world, and take away the power of the other rulers.

She formed the strategy for that until now and then executed it in a flash.

Until now it was just as Listelka planned, but after that there was a problem.

「The proficiency of their subordinates is higher than expected.」

Listelka muttered. The maid Mishis responded to that.

「The alliance's elite force that were placed there in order to conquer Avalon shouldn't have solid unity, but not even the slightest unrest can be seen from them. It seems that the aide of Captain Magialca, Lolotte is taking command of the whole army, while the aide of Sir Singlen, Zweigbergk is leading the troops.」

Even though Magialca and Signlen fell into the hands of the Lords, the left behind alliance army didn't fall into disorder was largely thanks to their achievements.

「Even though their master was taken away, there is no one who lacks composure. That is unexpected. Most likely they were given instructions beforehand even in the case that their master was killed.」

Singlen and Magialca had trained their confidants beforehand like that.

「I didn't intend to underestimate them but, they are quite able for mere humans, aren't they?」

She planned to ambush the remaining panicked force with the Abyss and trap them when they charged in confusion, but after they took back the fortress that was their base, they calmly began to march towards the old castle in composure.

If the powerful people of the New Kingdom were able to link up with them at this rate, it might become dangerous.

The main part of Avalon existed underground the old castle at the abandoned capital Guernica.

It was mainly divided between the surface castle as the exterior and the deep level floor inside. The center was hidden in the deep level floor.

It was possible to control the functions to a certain degree with Listelka's ability at the surface level floor, but for the deep level floor, Listelka had to head there by herself.

Thus—at this rate their capture of Avalon might be hindered.

「.....Fugil, will you tell me your opinion? I wish to listen to the advice of my hero. The capture of Avalon will still take a long time.」

「.....」

Fugil turned his face towards his master when he was addressed directly.

His expression was sporting a calm smile.

Mishis couldn't read his emotion from that.

「The Empire's Assassin Blade—the Drag-Knight Kirihime Yoruka came from the nation of Koto. Is your highness aware of that?」

「I have heard about it, but what about her?」

When Fugil started talking with a calm tone, Listelka tilted her head in puzzlement.

「It seems that instead of the board game called chess, there was something similar called shougi in the nation of Koto. There is one difference that is the most striking from chess—it's how it can reuse the pieces other than king.」

「What relation does it have with this battle situation?」

The maid Mishis cut in with her usual calm expression.

Then as though waiting for that, Fugil took out a chess piece—a pawn from his breast pocket and put it on the room's table.

「It means just as it is. I'm talking about using the pieces we stole, Mishis.」

「I see, so there is that way.」

Listelka clapped her hands lightly and showed a graceful smile.

But, in contrast Mishis made a dubious face.

「You are planning to make use of the captured Seven Dragon Paladins? There is a way, but it's dangerous. In the worst case that their restraints will slip off.....」

「It will be fine Mishis. Well then, let's begin negotiations with them. Before Hayes kills them—」

Listelka entered a good mood from Fugil's advice and she began the preparation for making contact.

Even Mishis was unable to interrupt any further than this.

「Then, let's ask her right away. To my loyal little sister—」

The second imperial princess of the Lords who disguised herself as a royalty of the Vanheim Principality called Coral, Aeril Vi Arcadia, and the third imperial princess Hayes Vi Arcadia.

Listelka sent communication to the first floor of the old castle, where the two of them were at.

—

Just a few dozen minutes ago, before the Lords started taking action, Lux was waking up inside a prison.

# Episode 1 – The Second Collar

## Part 1

The cold and scraggy sensation of stone floor.

Both his hands that were shackled and hung up with wooden handcuffs were feeling slight pain.

Lux faintly opened his eyes after feeling the faint light of tallow lamps.

「This place..... where, is it?」

The atmosphere was different from the fortress in the abandoned capital Guernica. It felt somewhat nostalgic with the smell of mold.

Right after the revolution, Lux along with Airi were locked in prison as the survivors of the imperial family.

After that, the last time was when he was also once put inside the prison of the Academy if he remembered correctly.

But, at that time, even though he was captured as a peeper in the large public bath, the atmosphere felt vaguely gentle.

In contrast, right now a cold hostility was stinging his skin.

While Lux was thinking of such thing, there was the presence of something moving in front of his eyes.

「Aren't you composed there, sleeping soundly even as a prisoner.」

「-.....!？」

Lux groaned when cold water was poured on his head.

Since when—or perhaps she was already there from the beginning?

A silver haired girl wearing a pilot suit and a robe above it.

He remembered seeing those mismatched eyes of grey and blue color before.

「Hayes..... so you're alive.」

The third imperial princess of the Holy Arcadia Empire, and the arms dealer who carried out secret maneuvers in many countries and scattered the sparks of war.

She was a longtime enemy who in the past led Heiburg and the remnants of the Old Empire in her scheme to destroy the New Kingdom.

Lux thought she died in the decisive battle at the Royal Capital Lordgalia but—

「That tattoo on your face, a Baptism huh.....」

Most likely, she was revived by using the surgery to familiarize her body with the secret medicine, Elixir, that strengthened the human body.

She was emitting even more villainous temperament than before. She brought her smile closer to Lux who was chained in front of her.

「I have come back from hell, Prince-sama. My life won't last long after getting forcefully revived using Baptism. During that time I'll make you taste a living hell where you are going to beg for death!」

「.....」

「I'm not gonna feel satisfied with just making you son of a bitch and the New Kingdom into scrapped trash. I'm gonna trample the comrades who are pining for you into dust. I'll leave you half-alive for that.」

「You who was revived, negotiated with Dragon Marauder and made them betray Soffice, was that it?」

「Looks like you don't understand your position here eeeh!」

With a snap, Hayes took out a whip and struck Lux's skin.

「Gu.....！」

Because he wasn't wearing a Drag-Ride, his pilot suit that wasn't strengthened by anything was torn and blood oozed out.

Lux was unable to prevent himself from leaking out a pained groan from the intense pain.

「Don't make a noise yet. We've got a lot of time y'know, first I've got to practice. Gotta start for real after making you learn what pain is.」

「What, are you planning.....?」

Hayes was bringing a strange collar in front of Lux who was breathing roughly from pain.

The collar was about the same size as the criminal collar Lux was wearing, but it looked excessively ominous.

A metallic collar with dark red color like blood rust.

Right after it was fixed on his neck with a stabbing discomfort, Lux's shackles were taken off.

「.....!？」

Lux felt suspicion that he was released from the binding so suddenly.

Even though his body's motion was dull from getting restrained for too long, he would be able to subdue Hayes now.

「I took it off so don't move at all Prince-sama. I'm going to whip you now. Just be quiet there, you rebel!」

Hayes raised the corners of her lips and moved her whip once more.

Lux reflexively twisted his body. At that instant. electric heat and impact ran through his body.

「Guh, AAAaAH.....!？」

An intense pain that felt like his nerves were getting burned ran through him. His consciousness was getting farther.

Hayes's whip was swung down right after that, but Lux didn't feel pain.

After rolling around on the stone floor for a full ten-odd seconds, he was

finally able to resume breathing.

「Ku-ku-ku. How's that, the taste of this special collar—the『Wedge』 huh? But, don't think that you can enjoy it no matter how many times okay? If you go against our orders while wearing that collar, it will increase its power until you die after disobeying just three times, yeah.」

『U, a. Haa, haa.....』

Lux kept lying down on the prison's stone floor while being unable to even raise his voice properly.

But, he understood her words.

Most likely this collar was designed to sense the will of Hayes and the other Lords and poured electric shock into the wearer.

「I'll be troubled if you die as you please so I'll say it one more time. Electricity will flow if you go against our orders. Even if you try to get other people to take off that collar for you, electricity is going to flow. Even if you are harboring rebellious thoughts against us, electricity is going to flow. Even if you get away from this old castle, the electricity is going to flow. That's all. If you get it, then stand up right away, though it will be a different story if you want to get shocked once more.」

「-.....!？」

Seeing Hayes's wicked look, the complexion of Lux who was numb from the intense pain changed.

If Hayes's words just now was the truth, including the information that they were in the old castle at the abandoned capital Guernica, he would be electrified if he went against her orders even if it was an order that was impossible to be carried out.

If he was electrified now, he might die from the shock.

He had to manage somehow to prevent that.

「The order『right away』 is vague, but at the latest it has to be within five seconds I guess? Although you are just a former Prince-sama, you at least know that much don't you?」

「.....Ku, AAAAAAH!」

Lux wrung out all his strength towards Hayes's mocking question.

He punched his numb leg and recovered his senses from that pain.

When he stood up barely within five seconds, Hayes who saw that clapped.

「Ku-ku-ku. Good good, so you can do it huh, Prince-sama. But, the main event will be from here, yeah. Several more trials are necessary for you to become fully qualified as our slave.」

「Trials, you say.....?」

「Damn straight, you've got to punish with your own hands, that insensitive person over there who turned a blind eye since some time ago.」

「Oi Lord-sama, don't tell me that by insensitive person, you mean me?」

A casual and sulky voice resounded inside the prison.

Lux didn't notice because Hayes was right in front of him right after he woke up, but right beside him, the Seven Dragon Paladin of the Vanheim Principality was chained.

Lux looked around in panic, but he didn't find the figures of the remaining members in this prison.

Were they imprisoned separately in another place, or else—

「I'll say this just in case, it's not like I was turning a blind eye yeah. I just cannot get myself to go along with your bad taste.」

Even though he should have seen the disastrous scene of Lux just now, his attitude was insolent as usual.

But, Hayes who saw that wasn't angry. Rather she gazed at Greifer's face with an expression that seemed to be having fun.

「Bad taste eh. Don't tell me that you think I'm going to whip you bastard just like this?」

「How about trying it. I'm tough so it will be worth doing it, yeah.」

「Ku, kukukuku..... You hear that Lux, you whip him.」

「.....-!？」

Hayes suddenly reversed her hold on her whip and presented the handle to Lux.

Lux who saw that was bewildered while guessing Hayes's malicious intention.

「What is your, intention?」

When Lux asked back with a bitter expression, Hayes's mouth warped into a wide grin.

「Oi oi, aren't you listening Prince-samaaa? I'm telling you to whip that guy. Even if you are just a dimwitted fake prince, there ain't no way you cannot do something that simple right?」

「.....」

「Hah, are you trying to break unity by making fellow comrades fight each other? It's unfortunate, but we Seven Dragon Paladins are just a mish-mashed gathering yeah? Aren't you mistaking your method huh?」

Lux fell silent at Hayes's command, but Greifer didn't show any agitation at all and muttered with an exasperated tone.

His attitude seemed to say come at me anytime, but Lux didn't move.

「Oi, what the hell are you doing? Just hit me already. A whip that is swung by that thin arm of yours will be just like a mosquito's bite.」

Greifer prompted with a tone that sounded mocking.

However, Lux noticed.

That was Greifer acting considerate in his own way.

He was deliberately provoking Lux to lighten Lux's guilt.

Being whipped and the electricity from the collar—the Wedge, it was obvious that the electricity was stronger.

Furthermore, the electricity that Lux would receive for the second time would be stronger than the previous one.

Thinking carefully, whipping Greifer just as he was told would be better for

the condition of the Seven Dragon Paladins on the whole. Lux understood that.

But—

「Do it quickly! Hit that guy who hasn't done anything bad by your own will!  
Do it shitty prince! Torture that guy for the sake of your own shitty self!」

「——」

Lux inhaled and lifted up the whip.

Greifer didn't show any sign of fear, even so he couldn't strike.

「—U, GUaAAaAaAH.....!」

Instantly, sparks scattered in front of Lux's eyes. Flashes illuminated the inside of the prison.

「This, fucking idiot-!」

Greifer smacked his lips seeing Lux who collapsed from the intense electricity that was generated from the Wedge.

In the end he couldn't do it.

Even though he understood that the pain of whipping would be lighter than his own, Lux was unable to lay his hands on his comrade.

(So, it's the second electric shock with this, I'll die with the third time.....)  
Inside his receding consciousness, Lux saw the smile of the demon who was looking down on him.

「Kukukukuku. You ain't thinking, that you are going to get excused or anything riight? It will be troubling if the bait died from training. I'll still make you torture the others later. So it will be easier to bait the hangers-on of you bastard!」

(So that's it, Hayes's objective is.....!)

Using Lux to annihilate Lisha and the others of Syvalles.

Lux was kept alive in order to trap the girls.

Until then this kind of torture would surely continue.

His nerves were paralyzed by the second electric shock and his limbs lost all

feeling.

Like that, his consciousness slipped down into the dark abyss.

## Part 2

「Nn, ku.....!」

Lux opened his eyes along with a stinging pain.

It seemed he was let asleep after losing consciousness. An old and dull wooden ceiling entered his eyes.

「Ih! U.....!」

The moment he gasped in nervousness, an intense pain stopped his breathing.

However, he didn't even have leeway to groan slowly.

If Hayes was in front of him and gave him an order once more, he would have to move no matter what.

But, if he was ordered to do the same thing next, would he be able to do it?

An act of one-sidedly torturing someone innocent who couldn't resist—

When he tried to lift his body along with such fear, a hand that reached out quickly from the side stopped him.

「You must not! Don't move—」

Lux who was laid down on a sofa felt tense towards the presence that was looking down on him from right beside him.

He put up his guard thinking that an enemy was undoubtedly beside him, but when he focused his eyes, he could see a familiar side face.

「You are, Coral.....?」

An androgynous face, no—right now he already understood that it was really a feminine face, which was undoubtedly the face of a girl his age.

Her braided beautiful silver hair and her mismatched eyes of gray and green

color were the proof of the ancient era's imperial family, the Lords.

The second imperial princess of the Holy Arcadia Empire, Aeril Vi Arcadia.

Just the other day, she showed her figure in place of Coral who was thought to have died in battle. She was the culprit who knocked out Lux and Greifer.

「So you are still calling me with that name. Me who betrayed you and caused you to experience something like this—」

The girl was looking down on Lux with eyes that looked lonely and also pained somewhere.

But, even though she was also a Lord, he couldn't feel any hostility like Hayes from her.

She was simply smearing medicine on his scalded skin with gentle hand movement.

This place wasn't the prison where Lux was at previously, but it seemed to be an office that was also inside the old castle.

He was laid down on a dusty sofa that was surrounded with old furniture.

There were no other people other than Lux and Aeril who were mutually wearing pilot suits. A peaceful atmosphere was flowing.

「Was it also you, who changed my pilot suit?」

His pilot suit that became tattered because of Hayes's whipping had been changed with a brand new one without him noticing.

「That's right—ah, sorry! It was because I couldn't smear the medicine well unless I did that! It wasn't like I did anything improper, but, that.....I only saw it slightly.」

Aeril cheeks reddened slightly and her eyes swam around. Lux smiled wryly seeing that.

Even though her appearance had changed and her identity as the Lords's second imperial princess had come to light, she was talking to Lux with the same atmosphere as before.

「More importantly, I'm really sorry. Even though I'm also here, I couldn't stop

my little sister's—Hayes's violence.]

The girl lowered her head deeply with a pained look.

Lux guessed that the event before this was something that happened while Aeril didn't know.

「Coral.....no, Aeril. What are you—?」

「I, was entrusted with this kind of mission since the beginning. Using the ability of Ruin with the power of this Baptism, I falsified my appearance—. From the start my objective was to control the battle situation to be convenient for the Lords.」

Aeril started talking with a low voice like that.

「Because I knew that Lux-kun is a Seven Dragon Paladin, and also the central figure of the New Kingdom, I stayed at your side and observed your actions even more than before. However, when all the Ruins were liberated, I became unable to keep staying as Coral anymore.」

「.....」

The camouflage function of perception manipulation by using a part of the Ruin's power that was possible through Baptism.

By fully using that power that led a human's perception astray and made them hallucinate, she succeeded in becoming an aide of a Seven Dragon Paladin.

Did she used up her power as the compensation for that?

Or perhaps there was no more need for her to deceive others?

「I am, the cowardly enemy who carried out the sneak attack against all of you. I think it's only natural that you are holding a grudge towards me. But, I myself have no intention to hurt all of you. Hayes hates you Lux-kun, because you are from the family of traitors, but even that is actually a mistake.」

「A mistake.....?」

「Yes. Because that is—」

「Oh ho, so you took away your little sister's toy and are having fun here,

Onee-sama.]

「.....!?」

The door at the back was opened violently and Hayes who was clad in a robe stepped inside.

Lux immediately put up his guard, but Aeril stood up in Hayes's way with a firm expression.

「It's my jurisdiction here. I won't let you lay your hand on him until I finished giving that talk.】

「Hah!】

Hayes snorted in annoyance looking at Aeril.

「Did you feel sympathy after pretending to be their ally? Looks like my family is really weak against men eeh. Or is this the character of the kind Onee-sama personally?】

Hayes spat out with a haughty attitude towards Aeril who was the second imperial princess.

At first Lux thought whether Hayes's attitude was just because of her grudge, but he could feel that her temperament was even wilder than before, and also looked like it wasn't simply because of her hatred towards Lux.

Most likely it was the influence of the Baptism that was applied in order to revive her.

The injection of Elixir also influenced the user's mind and magnified their negative emotions.

Thus, Hayes's atrocious and severe personality were also amplified.

Aeril replied calmly to the end towards such Hayes.

「It's neither of that. The Seven Dragon Paladins and him are an excellent ace in the hole to be used in the negotiation after this. Even the slightest chance of losing them due to torture that is just for your whim is intolerable.】

「Kukukukuku, then, carry out Listelka-neesama's instruction right away. My body's ache won't settle down, so I'm gonna show up on the battlefield for

now.]

(Battlefield.....?)

Lux who listened to Hayes's speech thought of a small question inside his heart.

This place was the old castle in the abandoned capital Guernica. It was slightly curious to call the capturing of Avalon that was said to exist underground here as a 『battlefield』.

Taking into account Aeril's sentence 「Capturing the Seven Dragon Paladins」 that she said just now, most likely the elite force of the world alliance was still remaining in the fortress.

Did their talk mean that Hayes would go out to suppress that force?

「I don't mind. But Hayes, do you understand about your own situation? With that body, you will only be able to fight once or twice with full strength. Do you plan to die before capturing Avalon?」

「No need to worry. I'll only lightly instigate the Abyss. The preparation of Nidhoggr is also still midway after all.」

「.....」

The Divine Drag-Ride Hayes used, Nidhoggr.

The Divine Drag-Ride that he once destroyed together with Lisha. Hayes deliberately divulging the information that it was repaired must be as a threat.

After looking down at Lux with a mocking gaze, Hayes left the room.

「Fuu.....」

The tension that was like a storm had passed and Aeril sighed deeply.

She was certainly friendly, but it seemed that her stance as a Lord didn't change.

But he wondered why.

Was Lux's feeling that still wanted to believe in her just him escaping reality?

「My bad but, that's how it is. It's necessary for us Lords to capture Avalon

earlier than anyone. For that I was given instructions to capture and make use of you all. That's why Lux-kun, I'll also have you work still.]

「What are you planning, to make me do?」

Lux asked with a calm tone. Aeril told him.

「I'll go to release the chain of Greifer and Sir Singlen. I want you to go out from here and enter the room at the right, then bring the remaining Seven Dragon Paladins here. All of you got the Wedge fitted from the start, so don't think to escape, because the electric current will flow even if you just try to take it off.」

「.....」

Lux silently nodded and followed Aeril's instructions.

He was feeling somewhat doubtful why the release of the female members was left to him, but he immediately understood that it must be Aeril's meager consideration.

Even among the Seven Dragon Paladins, Lux was close with all the members. So the meaning of Aeril leaving Lux to bring them here must be to give them some relief.

「Eerr, is it this room?」

Lux followed Aeril's direction and moved to the room at the right—a place that seemed to be the parlor room of the old castle and put his hand on the doorknob.

He was curious about the large box that was in front of the room, but it would be unbearable if he got electrified if he carelessly investigated it, so he ignored it.

He took a deep breath, and stepped inside along with slight tension.

「Is everyone here? This is Lux, excuse me—.....-!？」

「—!? KYAAAAAH.....!？」

An old parlor room with sunlight shining in from the window.

The moment Lux entered inside, an unexpected sight made him stand still.

Lux was worried whether the girls received torture from Hayes, but it ended as simply his needless anxiety.

Everyone had the dark red collar, the Wedge, fitted on their necks, but it was obvious with a glance that they weren't harmed at all.

The reason was—because no one was wearing any clothes.

Strictly speaking, they were wearing a single cloth that covered their body's lower part, but there was nothing else other than that.

「Hohou. So you will peep even at this kind of situation. Aren't you a great man, mine sweetheart.」

A girl with her arms folded without trying to hide her nakedness at all was boldly smirking at him.

The captain of the Seven Dragon Paladins, Magialca Zen Vanfrick.

It seemed she was actually a woman of blooming age, but her appearance and her petite stature made her look like an immature girl.

Her underwear was a light yellow fabric that was tied with string. From under her folded arms, her smallish breasts that were vividly shaking from her breathing could be seen.

「Wai-, just what are you thinking, Onii-chan!?」

The one who was puffing her cheeks angrily in anxiety was the youngest Seven Dragon Paladin, Mel Gizalut.

She had beautiful wavy platinum hair.

And then her well-ordered young face was dyed with shame. She was bringing about a somewhat immoral charm.

Her underwear was a lacey panty that was the same pure white color like her skin. The small stitched ribbon on it was lovely.

Because she had opened her heart to Lux since the incident in the Ymir Theocracy, she had a favorable impression towards Lux, but as expected she was showing a troubled face from the embarrassment.

Even though her breasts were so small that they could be hidden with her

slender arms, her figure covering her body was strangely lovely.

「I'm seen again. As expected, this young man is a hardcore pervert.....!」

The one who was showing a gaze that was a mix of shame and resentment from her expressionless face was Soffice Xfer, someone who was still fresh in memory from crossing swords against each other just the other day.

She was hugging both her shoulders by crossing her arms with only a single underwear of black fabric covering her.

She was turning her back to him to hide her skin from him, but her brown skinned back looked captivating.

And then—the last was a girl with distinctive crimson hair, Rosa Granhide.

She was brainwashed by Callesia, the King of Vices who was controlling Heiburg from the shadows and was made to play the villain role, but it seemed that right now she had returned slightly to her original self. She was hiding her voluptuous breasts with her palms.

Her red underwear that looked blazing was also leaving an impression, but the valley of her white voluptuous breasts were attracting Lux's gaze even more.

「Lux-sama.....!? Tha, that, if you wish for my body—」

「Wait, what are you doing Rosa!? It's fine if you hide them without showing me! I didn't come here wishing for that!」

Rosa's eyes opened wide for a moment in some kind of misunderstanding, then her hand was timidly moving away from the breasts she were hiding.

The other girls who were seeing that were startled and they all raised their voices shrilly.

「.....This person, isn't her character changing when she is in front of Onii-chan?」

「You really cannot be underestimated. To think that your relationship with Rosa became like this without me noticing.」

Mel was raising a bewildered voice while beside her Magialca continued after

her cheerfully.

Soffice muttered a fatal line with a gaze that looked somewhat creeped out.

「This young man wasn't satisfied with just disgracing the captured me in the Academy..... This flow, he will play a perverted prank on me once more—」

「Wait, Onii-chan!? What did you do to Soffice!?」

「Lux-sama, ple, please be affectionate to—」

「What. So you two already had fun previously? Then I'll join in too.」

While Mel was flustered, Rosa was misunderstanding further and sending Lux a feverish gaze, and Magialca was tracing Lux's chest with her finger provocatively.

「That's not it! REALLY JUST WHAT IS GOING OOOOOON!」

The situation that was just too absurd caused Lux to yell. The door behind him opened at that time and Aeril entered.

「Ah.....」

「Ah.....」

With a snap Aeril's mild expression stiffened into a twitching smile.

For a while, Aeril stared alternately at the half naked girls behind Lux, then before long she let out a small sigh.

「Hmmmm. I seeee」

She made a cold smile that was unusual for her and then without pause she left.

「—Wait! Don't leave while understanding to a mistaken direction like that please!?」

「It's fine to take your time you know? That's, it's not like I'll pry into it excessively.」

「Why are you strangely angry!? It's me who wants to ask what is with this situation though!」

Aeril was turning a gaze that contained danger inside it somewhere towards

him. In response Lux quickly chased and caught up to her.

Originally it would be better to be left alone without the eyes of the Lords watching, but it would be unbearable to be left alone like this.

「Now now, both of you, listen to what I have to say.」

There, Magialca moved to the front of Lux and Aeril in that timing.

Even though she was half-naked with the aforementioned Wedge put on her neck, she was standing and acting boldly.

「Ku-ku-ku. I stayed quiet because it was fun teasing you two, but it will also be a waste to let go of this chance so I'll lend you a favor. Most likely this is the scheme of that dirty-mouthed arms dealer.」

「Eh.....?」

「Hayes? That's—」

Lux was making a dubious face, while Aeril asked back.

Then Magialca pointed at outside the door.

「There is a container around there correct? When that arms dealer put on these collars, she tore off our clothes. Well, it was under the pretense of taking away hidden weapons and so on, but even after that she didn't return our clothes. Thinking about that, surely you get the gist of the idea now.」

「That girl, just what in the world.....?」

Aeril looked perplexed, but even Lux didn't get any idea what this was about.

Then, Magialca let out a sigh that was mixed with exasperation and shrugged her shoulders.

It was inconsequential but, she wasn't embarrassed at all even though she was in front of Lux, so it felt like various things would become visible.

「That arms dealer is really resentful to Lux right? I understand when looking at your wound under your suit. In that case in order to give your even more suffering, there is a possibility that she intended to make use of us.」

「Is that, related with the nakedness?」

Aeril tilted her head with a serious face. In response Magialca snickered.

「You are more innocent than expected if you still don't understand after I spoke this far. What is a method to corner Lux and us the female members of the Seven Dragon Paladins mentally? I have an idea what kind of vulgar event that might make that low-life happy.」

「-.....!? Don't tell me—that's」

It seemed Aeril hit upon something after a few seconds. Her noble face flashed bright red.

Was it shame, or rage?

Or perhaps both those emotions were fighting each other from Lux's point of view.

An instant later Lux also noticed.

This was the same like when Hayes tried to make Lux whip Greifer before this.

Surely this time she would try to make Lux violate the girls of the Seven Dragon Paladins.

「What, a thing」

He trembled once more at Hayes's bottomless malice that was rampaging due to the Baptism.

Magialca gave the same explanation to the other members. The girls were comprehending the situation while speaking unanimously.

「We get it already! So Onii-chan get out right away!」

The completely correct statement that Mel spoke gave Lux no choice but running away.

Thus this commotion that occurred right in the middle of the enemy camp closed its curtains.

And then, everyone changed into their respective outfits that Aeril brought for them, then a few minutes later—the Seven Dragon Paladins received a new trial.

## Part 3

The central corridor in the old castle of the abandoned capital Guernica.

Lux and the others, the Seven Dragon Paladins who reunited with Aeril's guidance were walking towards the audience hall.

No, it would be more accurate to say that she was taking them there.

All the members of the Seven Dragon Paladins had their necks fitted with the Wedge. It was effectively impossible for them to disobey orders, escape, or act defiant.

Of course everyone was unarmed. They didn't have anything in hand.

It seemed their Sword Devices were hidden somewhere in this old castle. She didn't tell them the location.

They were walking in the corridor of the old castle that was turned into an abandoned building while following Aeril's lead.

「You look more energetic than expected there. As expected you are tough after crossing through so many lines of death huh.」

Lux quietly smiled wryly at Greifer's casual talk.

His tone was blunt, but he was worrying about Lux in his own way.

「Don't overdo it, Onii-chan.」

Even Mel who heard about the torture patted his back quietly with her small hand.

Even the members of the Seven Dragon Paladins who at first were hostile or putting distance from him now had amiable relations with him in some respects.

It was unfortunate that they were captured like this, but this point was the only salvation for Lux.

「.....」

On the other hand, he still didn't understand what was on Singlen's mind.

He was silently standing there with his expression still filled with his usual bottomless fearlessness.

His attitude was haughty as always.

Lux's face was slightly reflected on his eyes that were emitting overwhelming pressure that wouldn't submit to anyone.

「Looks like you refused the enemy's order and got electrified huh. Your big foolishness hasn't changed at all.」

「I'm aware of that.」

Just as he thought, this man wasn't an ally.

However, for some reason he was obsessed with Lux and of all things he was secretly maneuvering to win him over.

He also still didn't understand the reason.

「However, I don't think that I did the wrong thing. Even if it will only end with fewer harm to the Seven Dragon Paladins on the whole, if I whipped my comrade at that time just as I was told, it would have left a burden in my own heart.」

Rather than a serious injury, injuring someone innocent by someone's order would dull his skill more due to the great regret that he would feel.

He was unable to do anything else than that.

「You are a fool as expected. Why are you choosing this kind of path while being aware yourself that you cannot do anything but that?」

「What do you mean?」

But, Singlen cut down Lux's determination with a derisive smile.

There was no way they could talk too loudly, so they kept their voices small, but he couldn't help but ask back.

「You ask me what do I mean? It's a big problem if you don't realize it. If you

are begging for peace, then don't go to the battlefield, you can just offer prayer at the church. If you love the people, then don't aim to be consul or anything, you can just manage an orphanage.]

「.....?」

「A knight that wishes for peace, a politician that loves the people. You are stepping onto a path seeking something that is essentially impossible to exist. In a glance you and that guy look like complete opposites, but you two are completely similar, that pure foolishness.】

「Who do you mean by that guy? You mean Fugil?】

Lux got his attention to that part from the content of Singlen's talk and snapped at it.

「Enough with the pointless talk there. The electricity will flow if you talk more than that.】

But, Aeril quietly told them that when they arrived at the audience hall.

The rubble of the broken castle wall were scattered everywhere inside the audience hall, with carpet and tapestries that were ravaged by time.

Inside that sight that gave the impression of a grand history and the ups and downs of life, they were waiting.

The first imperial princess of the Lords, clad in a pure white dress, Listelka Rei Arshalia.

Standing besides her, the Key's Supervisor maid, Mishis V Xfer.

Standing by at the right, was a man with similar silver hair as Lux. The general of the Lords and the imperial princess's knight, Fugil Arcadia.

(Fugil..... just what are you thinking?)

Lux understood that it was pointless even if he became conscious of Fugil in this situation, even so he couldn't help but become conscious.

In the Old Empire, at first he was an elder brother who was watching over Lux's growth.

Next he acted as a compatriot with the same intentions.

At the end he was an existence that accomplished the bloody revolution and betrayed Lux.

And then, now, he was taking place as the aide of the imperial family of the ancient era, the Holy Arcadia Empire.

Previously he was acting in concert with Hayes. But even while doing that, he gave Lux advice to save Philuffy on Ries Island.

He still couldn't see Fugil's objective.

Whether from his words that he heard in the past, or from his whimsical acts.

Everything he did seemed to be something he did seriously, but he also felt the hint like he was playing around.

「Welcome, the Drag-Knights that are the pride of each country of the world alliance, everyone of the Seven Dragon Paladins. We have met many times at the summits, so I'll omit the minute explanation. That is including Aeril over there too.」

「.....」

Everyone held their tongue at Listelka's preface.

She was acting courteous on the surface, but the moment the path to capture Avalon was opened, she was the ringleader who bared her fangs towards the world alliance and threatened them.

Furthermore the Sword Device of everyone was taken away and an electric shock collar, the Wedge, was fastened on all of them, so there was no way they would let their guard down.

It would be fine if she just threw them all into prison. But for her to call all of them like this, they had nothing but a bad premonition.

Even though Aeril was on the enemy side, but Lux could trust her to a certain degree, and yet this first imperial princess was a different matter.

After observing the attitude of the Seven Dragon Paladins, Listelka smiled gracefully while starting to talk leisurely.

「Please don't think badly of me. After all, it had been determined from the

start that it will become like this. Although all of you are mongrel who sprang out later on, but I'll show respect to your strength. Thanks to you all, the capture of the Ruins is finished without any damage for us.]

「If she is saying that seriously then she is one unbelievable woman yeah. Someone like my princess-sama is just a cute little thing compared to her.】

Greifer muttered with a small voice. Lux who heard that was feeling a chill in his heart.

「But, unfortunately I have no choice but to do this. It's important to reach Avalon, but first I have to erase the sovereigns of the world. For us, the Lords, to reign on the summit of the world just like before, at the start we have to correct that mistaken ruling system so—】

「-.....!？」

Lux was speechless towards that line that was muttered very naturally.

That was the same scene like Lux had seen in the past at the Old Empire.

A conceit that oneself was undoubtedly the legitimate ruler, where other humans weren't even considered as their equals from the very start.

This girl's warped sense of values wasn't comparable with the Old Empire.

「But, there are still several Drag-Knights with real ability remaining. I thought to have you all serve as hostages until all of them were annihilated but—】

(.....As I thought. This girl cannot be allowed to monopolize Avalon.)

Lux bit his lip slightly and hardened his determination once more to not submit to these people. It was at that time that unexpected words were said.

「But, my knight Fugil gave me advice and I noticed a certain thing. Although all of you are of lowborn, but you all are still experts with talent. It will be a bit of a waste to cut down all of you. After all, right now the number of our servants is lacking.】

「I see. I get it now Lord.】

Magialca who heard those words grinned boldly.

Before Lux could read her true intention, Listelka in front of him told the

answer.

「Those who are quick in the uptake must have understood already. In other words I want you all to swear your allegiance to us and enter our service. Of course we will grant you various privileges and rewards depending on the results you produce.」

Listelka showed a carefree smile and she pressed her hands on each other.

The members of the Seven Dragon Paladins fell silent hearing those words, but before long someone opened their mouth.

「That joke ain't funny at all, oi, ruler of the world-sama. Are you telling us to betray the world alliance and face the remaining guys there?」

「My, it might also become something like that. After all, those who continue to oppose us will become obstacles.」

Listelka answered Greifer's exasperated voice without any timidity.

Lux was in admiration that he would still crack jokes in this situation, but that must be how the man called Greifer was.

「More importantly you there, isn't your forgetfulness really serious? Don't you even remember what you have said yourself?」

Furthermore, the youngest Seven Dragon Paladin, Mel Gizalut, also continued next.

「What was it that you said in the world summit I wonder? You promised that if we raised achievements in capturing Ruins, you will prioritize us in the sharing of the technologies and legacies of the ancient era, didn't you? You broke that promise one-sidedly and then you tried to negotiate once more like this, aren't you looking down on other people too much?」

Even though she should have heard about the electric shock's strength from Lux, but that courage was just as expected from her.

Although she was still a little girl, she was still someone who was appointed as a member of the Seven Dragon Paladins.

But, it seemed Listelka had also already taken such reaction into her consideration. Her expression didn't waver.

She continued her words patronizingly with that elegant gesture and smile.

「It made my ears burn to hear that, but this time is different from before. The reason is because I won't make any such promise like that which I don't even intend to keep. What I will grant to you all is only a little bit of privilege to live freely. I won't grant anymore than that.」

「You don't even have any motivation to talk decently from the start eeh.」

Rosa Granhide responded with her usual acting tough. The place's tension was increasing further.

The will of the Lord Listelka was clear.

They, the Lords would monopolize the knowledge and technology of the Ruins without yielding even a single thing.

On top of that, she was trying to negotiate with only some freedom and privilege as the compensation.

「It's amazing that there are still people who will follow you guys like that.」

Even Soffice, whose standing with the Lord originally should be deep, was showing an attitude of rejecting to cooperate.

Amidst that, a single man suddenly came forward.

A lean man clad in deep blue robe—the Blue Tyrant, Singlen Shelbrit.

「Then, allow me to offer you my service, your highness.」

He showed an obedient attitude with his haughty and arrogant attitude staying unbroken.

Because Singlen had the Wedge fitted on his neck, he should be unable to make any opposition at all, but the maid Mishis moved to stand in his way as though on guard.

「It's enough with that announcement. The next time you try to come closer without permission, I will grant you punishment.」

「Excuse my rudeness then.」

Singlen backed down with a courteous smile.

Lux was surprised at that, but next he heard Magialca's voice that made him doubt his ears further.

「Can I also nominate myself? It will be regrettable if I die like this leaving behind my lovers.」

「—!？」

As expected, the remaining members were shaken seeing the captain as well the vice captain nominating themselves at the forefront.

Even Lux spontaneously made a doubting expression.

「Wait, what are you two thinking? You two are seriously going to listen to these bunch?」

「I ain't surprised at all with captain-san cause she is relatively a utilitarian, but I'm shocked out of my wits that even the vice captain-sama is that obedient yeah.」

Mel and Greifer were immediately complaining, but the two only grinned without replying back.

「Is that so? I understand.」

Listelka was looking alternately at the faces of the two, and then she straightened her back.

「I will give up adding only you two into my service.」

「.....!？」

Magialca and Singlen frowned hearing the words of Listelka that were tinged with harshness.

「What does that mean? Was the invitation just now only your highness's jest?」

Even so Magialca didn't show any agitation in her expression and questioned Listelka. Listelka smiled with composure.

「No, I'm serious when I said that I wish to appoint all of you to important posts. But, people who can change sides without any hesitation at all cannot be trusted. Besides—」

While saying that, Listelka suddenly turned her gaze towards the gap of the broken wall. The battle between the Abyss and the alliance troops were unfolding outside.

The swarm of fiendish Abyss surrounding the old castle.

The elite force of the alliance was peeling off that swarm bit by bit and continued to crush the Abyss that was lured out one by one.

It must be the Lord's miscalculation that even when the main force, the Seven Dragon Paladins, were all captured, the army would still maintain their supply line and continued to fight orderly.

At first Listelka predicted that the alliance army would collapse by themselves.

But right now, she was fearing the possibility that the capture of Avalon would be interrupted like this.

「The remaining force of the alliance army. The people who are commanding them are the aides of you two. So you see, because of that I harbor distrust whether the two of you have ulterior motives.」

「.....」

Seeing that exchange, Lux and the remaining Seven Dragon Paladins were holding their breaths.

Certainly, while the pure fighting strength of these two was also extraordinary, the impression that they left from their skills in scheming and bargaining didn't lose to that.

If these two showed acts of betrayal right away like just now, then anyone would instinctually get a bad premonition.

「And so, it will be execution for the two of you. Your value as hostages is also high, but it feels like it will be more dangerous to leave the two of you alive. Well then—」

「Please wait Ane-ue, I'm objecting to that.」

There a voice was suddenly raised.

Aeril, who was guiding Lux and co. until here, came forward in front of Listelka.

「What is it Aeril? There is no time so keep it short.」

「There won't be anyone else who will enter under our banner if we treat them as disposable pieces. Aren't we following the idea of General Fugil here?」

(Fugil's idea and.....piece?)

Lux surmised the situation of the Lords after hearing Aeril's words.

Because they were lacking manpower to capture Avalon and defending, they wanted to make use of the Seven Dragon Paladins.

Fugil advised so and the situation became like this. Lux predicted that the circumstances might be like that.

Listelka who heard what Aeril pointed out put the back of her hand on her mouth and looked down with a troubled expression.

「That is also true. Then Aeril, please be the one to choose.」

「Is that fine?」

「I don't mind. It is you who had watched them longer than anyone as an aide of the Seven Dragon Paladins, you should understand their strength and character so—」

Seeing Listelka nodding generously, Aeril turned around towards Lux and the others behind her.

She lightly looked around at everyone with her braided silver hair swaying behind her.

(Don't tell me, could it be—)

It seemed that his hunch was right, her gaze stopped still on Lux.

「I will endorse him. The New Kingdom's Seven Dragon Paladin, Lux Arcadia.」  
(TN: A trivia, Aeril is still using 'boku' to refer to herself even now) 「.....!？」

- Stir\*, soundless commotion leaked out from the surrounding.

Especially the Key's Supervisor Soffice was blinking in surprise.

She who knew about the history of the Lords was shocked that Aeril chose Lux who was ridiculed as a member of the family of traitors.

「I object to that. Certainly he might be a honest person but, he has an unknown part and ability to grow remarkably.」

The maid Mishis who was standing by at Listelka's side interrupted. Listelka lightly raised her hand and stopped her.

「Well, let's first ask her reason. Why do you decide on him, Aeril?」

「My decision is based on his strong and weak points.」

「And that is?」

「His strong point is his radical growth in short time and also his sharp mind. He also boasted the greatest number of Ragnaroks defeated. And even in battle against other Drag-Knights he boasted high winning percentage.」

「But, as useful and strong he is, it also shows how dangerous it will be when he turned traitor. That risk is almost zero with the Wedge on his neck but—」

While nodding to Aeril's words, Listelka also showed her doubt.

But, the second imperial princess continued right away.

「His weak point is useful for that. When he was ordered by Hayes to torture another Seven Dragon Paladin, he was unable to do it even knowing about the electric shock punishment from the Wedge.」

「Is that so, that means.....」

「His loyalty can be guaranteed if we use the remaining Seven Dragon Paladins and his comrades as collateral. For the rest I will take responsibility for his management.」

「I see.....」

Listelka nodded after hearing Aeril's proposal and she closed her eyes for a while.

Before long she seemed to finish sorting her thoughts and her small lips formed the answer.

「Then it's fine. You have accomplished a mission that made you worthy of

trust. In deference to that achievement, I will listen to your wish.]

「My thanks, Ane-ue.」

Aeril bowed respectfully then she led away the remaining Seven Dragon Paladins to the courtyard of the old castle.

Lux was led by Aeril alone into another room.

It was decided unexpectedly easily for Lux to be absorbed into the enemy camp, but he deliberately didn't object because he had his own thought.

That Coral.....Aeril was intentionally appointing him also factored in, but there was also how Magialca and Singlen who tried to switch sides at the beginning didn't speak any objection at all at that time.

Of course, it was also possible that they didn't say anything unnecessary because of the Wedge on their necks.

However Lux predicted that they had different aims.

Those two were the core of the Seven Dragon Paladins, and they were also skilled in bargaining. In any case, even the Lords should find it difficult to control them.

And so, could it be they were deliberately nominating themselves to make it easier for Lux to get chosen?

And then, he got the feeling that Aeril also nominated Lux with her own thought even while knowing the ulterior motives of those two.

It wasn't something he really had a basis to be confident about, but for some reason he got such feeling.

「Then, I'll have Lux-kun spend time together with me for a while.」

「Err, is it okay to use this room?」

The room Lux was ushered into was especially spacious. The inside was also put in order tidily.

He wondered if this room might have been a room for royalty before.

There was a huge bed with a canopy and red carpet with beautiful embroidery.

If the Lord intended to use this old castle as a base from the beginning, then that maid Mishis might be the one to clean and arrange the preparations.

Aeril sat down on that bed and gestured with her hand to beckon Lux closer.

When he sat down beside her just as he was told, their talk began.

「Fundamentally, Lux-kun will be under my supervision. That is the condition that Listelka-neesan gave, and above all else there is no way we can let you act freely.」

Aeril was only speaking matter-of-factly without showing any hostility or good will.

He couldn't read her thinking from that, but at the very least she gave a hint that she would persist with her standpoint as a Lord.

「How cautious. Even though you just said before that my loyalty can be guaranteed.」

「That's obviously just a surface stance. Certainly Lux-kun is careless in various aspects, and you also have a side that is full of openings. But—you are hiding a bottomless possibility which surpasses that.」

Lux was at a loss of how to respond to her tone that was vaguely filled with conviction.

But, as expected, even after her outside appearance had completely changed into a girl and one of the Lords, somewhere inside her was a strong trace of his amiable friend Coral.

「But, I never even dreamed that you would peek at girls' naked bodies even at this kind of place—as expected even I couldn't anticipate that.」

Suddenly Aeril turned a gaze that contained hidden meaning towards him.

Somehow, he also could feel a nuance of dissatisfaction from her gaze.

「That was an accidental incident and it wasn't my fault! Or rather, the previous times too also weren't something that I did intentionally!」

「I wonder. Even in the Vanheim Principality you were staring intently at my back.」

「That was because you were disguising yourself as a boy right!?」

「Ahaha. That's true.」

Aeril showed an innocent smile at Lux's retort.

Frankly speaking, even at those times when she was disguised as a boy, she gave off strange sex appeal, but since her appearance completely became a girl, he could feel her loveliness even more than before.

Whether it was her braided silver hair that looked like it had stardust sprinkled on it, or the swelling of her chest that gave a feminine impression.

And also the whiteness of her skin that could be seen from the gaps of the pilot suit, and her soft scent.

Just from being near her caused his emotions to well up along with the throbbing of his heart.

But, right now in their position, they were fellow enemies.

Lux took a deep breath, braced himself, and asked.

「And, what are all of you Lords going to make me do from here on?」

Luckily or unluckily, he obtained a bit of freedom under Aeril, but it didn't change the situation that he was still in a predicament.

First, he had to grasp the objective of these girls who were controlling Lux—as well as Fugil's objective.

「Right. Surely you want to ask that first. After this, we the Lords will capture the surface level floor of Avalon that is located underground the old castle. We have to step into there and open the gate, and then open the path to the deep level floor. I want Lux-kun to lend your strength for that.」

(.....?)

Lux was hesitating for a while at Aeril's proposal.

It wasn't that he was showing rejection to that demand itself.

He was feeling a strange uncomfortable feeling.

First he would move to the direction of solving those questions one by one.

「Wait a second. You all haven't put this Avalon under your control already?」

「It's annoying to have various information extracted like that but, it can't be helped. I'll tell you.」

Aeril was showing a slightly troubled expression while replying like that with a smile.

It seemed that Lux's intention was exposed, but she would tell him properly.

「This is a bit of a miscalculation, or should I say beyond our expectations. Avalon is also the same like the other Ruins, there are several stages of locks, so it won't be easy to be able to reach the control room. Originally it will take time to breakthrough using the Lords and Key's Supervisor's authority in conjunction.」

It was information that was already known to the Lords.

They were planning to steadily carry out that unlocking work that would take time so the world alliance wouldn't notice.

「But, that plan crumbled, is what you're saying?」

「Putting it bluntly, yes.」

Aeril leaked out a small sigh 'fuu' and hung her head down.

「After all the Ruins were captured, Listelka-neesan intended to advance the capture of Avalon secretly by ourselves.」

In order to enter Avalon, first the seven Ruins had to be in the liberated state.

But, the world alliance didn't know the location of Avalon, so the Lords intended to capture Avalon leisurely using the remaining days without notifying them.

Of course at the surface they would say that they couldn't find Avalon and was currently searching.

「But, that Seven Dragon Paladins captain, Magialca Zen Vanfrick surpassed our imaginations. Because she leaned close to the Marcafal Kingdom from the start and with the sharpness of her nose, she determined the location of Avalon. She left the capture of the Ruins to you guys while steadily advancing

the preparations for capturing Avalon at the side, and finally an elite force took position before our eyes.]

When that happened, it was the side of the Lords that became anxious.

They planned to make the world alliance capture the Ruins while they would get a jump ahead and conquer Avalon, but instead they got outwitted.

At that rate, Avalon would be taken away from them if they weren't careful.

The first imperial princess Listelka who realized that they didn't even have much time left played her trump card.

That was, the poisonous needle that she sent inside the Seven Dragon Paladins and world alliance—a spy called Coral. She bid her spy to act and aimed to hold back the enemy.

Lux's doubt was cleared after hearing the circumstance of Aeril and the others.

Why they had to capture the Seven Dragon Paladins even though the capture of Avalon was still remaining?

At the same time he also realized the reason why they were trying to use him as their pawn at this late hour.

「Then, that twelve days countdown that you all announced to the world, the declaration of purging the royalties and nobles are a diversion just as I thought.」

In order to avoid the countries from concentrating their forces on Avalon, and then in order to buy time until they finished their capture of Avalon, the Lords executed a strategy to make the leaders fall into chaos.

「No, there is also that but, Nee-san is most likely serious. She is trying to accomplish her mission as a survivor of the Lords.」

「.....」

Lux could do nothing but sigh seeing Aeril's anxious face.

If Listelka's aim was really to rearrange the ruling class, then different from Soffice, there would be no room for negotiation.

And then, right now, Lux had to help out with that.

「As I thought, I'm disinclined to do it.」

「.....That's, you know.」

The electric collar—the Wedge gave him no right to refuse, so Lux was at a loss of what he should do.

There were three options remaining for him.

First was to keep the Seven Dragon Paladins alive and listen to what he was told while looking for a chance to counterattack.

Second was to go against the order and committ suicide, where he could only pray that Lisha and the others would be able to stop Listelka.

Or else, to really obey the Lords for real.

Only the last option was impossible.

Thus Lux was weighing the two remaining options on the scale of his heart, it was then the girl before him brought her face closer to him.

「I'm sorry, Lux-kun.」

Aeril lowered her eyebrows, averted her eyes that were tinged with grief, and muttered.

「I know that it's just my selfishness to apologize at this kind of situation but, sorry, about everything until now, and also for what will happen from here on—」

「.....」

「Even so, if it's possible, if you will listen to me then I want you to help me. I want you to cooperate with the capture of Avalon not for me as the second imperial princess of the Lords, but for me as a person that you know. If you will do that for me, I will protect the safety of the Seven Dragon Paladins and your comrades in the Academy with all my strength.」

「What do you mean by that? Aren't you obeying Listelka's will as a Lord?」

Lux asked back like that in response to Aeril's emotional pleading.

「I'm a member of the Lords. The second imperial princess of the Holy Arcadia Empire. I have no intention to run away from that fate and mission. However, even I myself have my own will. I have a path that I should choose as an imperial family member.」

Aeril told her own wish as though to persuade herself.

「Lux-kun, even though you were an imperial family member of the Old Empire, you didn't follow custom and found your own answer. I believe that is the duty as someone who stands above others. At the very least that is what I believe.」

'That's why', the girl lightly put her hand on her chest and continued.

「I want you to cooperate with me. I want you to enable me to take Avalon. I want you to leave Avalon to this me, not my elder sister Listelka. With you, I have the feeling that I will be able to do that. I think I will be able to give a different answer than my elder sister. For a long time I didn't know that answer all along. But, right now—I feel like I know it.」

「.....」

That was a proposal that was terrifying in a sense.

After all, depending on how he interpreted it, he could also take it as Aeril was trying to act behind the back of the first imperial princess to stand on the summit herself.

Thinking from his position as a Seven Dragon Paladin, he shouldn't trust Aeril's words blindly.

In the first place, from the point when she launched a sneak attack on them, it was dangerous to trust her. And even if, for example, Lux cooperated with her, there was no guarantee that Aeril would be able to monopolize the system of Avalon.

What's more, it was largely possible that this story itself was a lie.

It might be a trick to make Lux give serious effort in conquering Avalon.  
(However—I wonder why. I want to believe her.)

Even though he had been betrayed by Fugil before, Lux's true feeling was

wishing for that.

But, a mistake here wouldn't be tolerated.

Depending on his choice, not just him, even the destruction of other countries would be determined.

Aeril seemed to sense that conflict which Lux felt. She silently stood up.

「My bad but, right now I don't even have time to let you think carefully. That's why—」

And then, she began to strip off the pilot suit she was wearing.

「Wai-.....!? What are you doing Aeril!？」

Lux spontaneously leaped up from the bed and covered his eyes with his hands.

Her naked body without a single string covering it was exposed under the bed's canopy.

The vivid swelling of her chest that gave the impression of the growth period.

The beautiful line of her thighs that, although long and slender, also possessed sensuality.

And then, her gaze that was enduring shame while begging for something.

「Right now, what I can give you, is only something like this.....that's why」

「Tha, that, what do you—」

「I want you, to test my resolve. The Wedge's electric shock won't activate if I don't recognize it as an attack from you. That's why, I want Lux-kun to do as you please. It's fine even if you want to hurt me just like what Hayes did, and even if you want to do other things, that you like—it's fine.」

「.....」

「No matter what you do to me, I won't perceive it as an attack. I want you to test it, because I can prove it like that. Because I'm, wishing for that so.....」

Lux understood with that sentence.

The reason why Coral—no, Aeril was asking Lux to wound her.

She was wishing for punishment.

She betrayed, tricked, and schemed against a young man who wanted to be her friend.

She was feeling pain in her heart that she had to do that because of her birth and for the sake of her mission.

But, the impulse that was born inside Lux was something of a different kind from that.

A young man the same age as Lux, his look was androgynous but he had a lovely face and Lux felt that his personality was favorable. That young man was transformed into a beautiful girl.

Such girl was exposing her skin to him like this and she was wanting pain from Lux.

Her averted face didn't look unconcerned at all, but a face that was enduring shame and terror.

His chest became so hot from that sight to the degree that he was doubting the reality, and the inside of his head was filled with fog.

However—

「Ah.....」

「If you don't dress up quickly, you will catch a cold, you know?」

Lux suppressed that various impulses and put the bed's blanket on her.

「It's impossible for me. Even if you are wishing for it from the bottom of your heart, I'll surely regret it if I hurt or disgrace you. That's why, I can't.」

Lux told so with a gentle smile.

「.....I see.」

Aeril smiled with an expression that looked relieved and somewhat lonely.

「Lux-kun is a strange boy just as I thought. Even though I'm someone who betrayed you and caused you to meet that kind of experience before this. Far from satisfying your grudge, you even hurt yourself.」



「Airi also often scolded me. She said that I'm too softhearted.」

「But I, like that side of you. Though it's unfortunate, just a little, that you won't do anything even after I'm going this far.....」

「Eh.....?」

Aeril muttered with a small voice toward Lux's wry smile.

When Lux asked back in response, the girl immediately came back to herself and got flustered.

「I, it's nothing at all-! I, i-i-i-it's not like I'm thinking of anything strange! The, then, about this talk—」

The matter of asking for Lux's help not for Listelka and also Hayes, but for Aeril herself to reach Avalon as quick as possible.

「Right. I'll cooperate, Aeril.」

「Lux-kun.....」

「Honestly speaking, I don't know what Aeril is going to do or whether it will be an answer that I can accept. But, I can believe that you are seriously trying to do something. And also right now, I can only bet on that.」

In the end it was something like that.

If he was imprisoned with the Wedge attached to his neck like this, or if he committed suicide due to his refusal of becoming a hostage, most likely there would be no change about this currently defeated situation.

Then, Lux chose the path of going along with Aeril's request while along the way he would discover an opening to use.

「Thank you, Lux-kun.」

Hearing Lux's answer, Aeril smiled in relief while hugging her own chest.

「My bad but, it's not like I fully believed in you yet. However—」

「Yes, I understand. Even so, I'm happy.」

Aeril told him with a smile that looked like she would break down crying anytime.

Like that she was overcome with emotion and hugged Lux tightly.

「Wai-, Aeril!? Your blanket is slipping!?」

In other words, seeing that the girl was naked, the swelling of her chest that was unimaginable when she was a man was directly pressing on him.

「Wawah! So, sorry-!? Geez, just what am I.....!?」

「Do, don't be too flustered! The electric shock from the Wedge will—!」

In the end the Wedge didn't activate, but Lux was scared to death.

「That was dangerous. I was told that the third electric shock will kill me for sure after all.」

「That's, your collar had been removed once so it's all right. Once the Wedge is removed and then put on again, the number of electric shocks will be reset too.」

Aeril who wore her pilot suit again said that with a bit of panic.

Perhaps because she was naked just now, or perhaps because of the hug, her cheeks were red in shame. Like that she held her right hand towards him.

「Then, Lux-kun. Best regards from here on.」

Lux grasped back the hand that Aeril timidly held towards him.

Thus, the transient contract was formed.

# Episode 2 – Armed Might Negotiations

## Part 1

「Haa.....haa..... We finally arrived, at the battlefield where Lux is waiting!」

The sun was shining at the zenith, it was a noon with clear weather.

Lisha who was wearing Tiamat with her blonde hair that was tied into side tail fluttering in the wind, and the others with her were overlooking the battle situation in the ruins from the sky.

On one side was the old castle with austere structure that was hiding Avalon underground.

A few kl away from there at the opposite side, the world alliance's force was gathered. The fortress that was their base and conning tower was standing high.

Less than two days since they departed from the new kingdom.

Lisha and Krulcifer caught up with Philuffy and Celis, then the four of them arrived at the abandoned capital Guernica in the Marcafal Kingdom to take back the Seven Dragon Paladins.

As expected, because this place was far from the New Kingdom, they took rest several times midway while taking turns wearing their Drag-Rides and traveled through the shortest distance.

Since the Seven Dragon Paladins were all captured, they heard that the momentum of Avalon's capture was decreased, but Lisha thought it was already amazing that the alliance army hadn't collapsed.

「Let's get down to the fortress quickly. But—we mustn't be impatient. We too cannot move satisfactorily with our exhaustion right now after all.」

Beside Lisha, Celistia who was driving the Divine Drag-Ride Lindwurm urged them ahead.

She wasn't wrong.

Even she who possessed extraordinary stamina among Drag-Knights had poured too much strength in this super-express marching.

First they had to show their faces to the present commander managing the fortress and then rest.

Thinking that, they sent communication through Dragon Voice, then a reply immediately came from inside the fortress.

『Who is this? Please state your affiliation and objective.』

The voice that came through a Drake's Dragon Voice belonged to a young boy.

In response Lisha took a deep breath and introduced herself.

『This is the group of the Princess of the New Kingdom Atismata, Lizsharte. At this chance I came to be of assistance to your army in order to save my knight who is one of the Seven Dragon Paladins, Lux Arcadia, and also as a member of the world alliance. I ask you to open the gate.』

After Lisha informed with a respectful tone, a reply came in almost no time at all.

『Welcome visitors from afar. I welcome your arrival.』

And then a few minutes after that, a silhouette appeared on the rooftop carrying a flag.

Receiving the permission to land, Lisha and Celis who were carrying Krulcifer and Philuffy respectively landed down.

The one who came to welcome Lisha and co. was a black haired boy with a small built.

『I am the aide of the Seven Dragon Paladins captain, Lolotte Cadius. At this

time I am entrusted with the overall command due to the capture of my master Magialca, that's why I'm leading the remaining troops like this. Pleased to make your acquaintance.]

「How is the situation? How is the condition of Lux and the others!?」

They had heard that the Seven Dragon Paladins were captured, but several days had passed since they received the information until arriving here.

Because of that Lisha was anxious. Lolotte smiled gently to calm her down.

「It's fine. There is no doubt that we are at a disadvantage, but at the very least, right now the battle is even to both sides. We don't have much leeway to progress leisurely, but we do have some room to form strategy calmly.」

「I, I see.」

Lisha sighed in relieve seeing the boy's calm response.

Magialca's aide never showed up at the meeting of the world alliance, but it seemed he had nerves of steel in contrast to his cherubic and young appearance.

Lisha staggered right after she dispelled her armor. Seeing that he first guided everyone to the guest room.

The constructed fortress was just as expected from Magialca who was a global multi-millionaire.

It should be a hastily made fortress that reused an abandoned military base, but in a short time it had been reconstructed with a make-up that even somewhat gave the impression of extravagance.

The enemy headquarters, the old castle, was just a few kl ahead from the fortress, the defense line that was formed by the White Ridge Knight Order under the leadership of Singlen's aide, Zweigbergk seemed to be functioning properly.

More than ten Drakes were constantly monitoring the surroundings, and an alarm would ring in an emergency.

「That's why, first, please wash your sweat and take a rest with ease. When your highness and your group are rested, I'm thinking it will be great if you will

allow me to explain about the situation and discuss it after dinner.]

「My thanks for your consideration, Lolotte-dono.】

「It's fine to just call me Lolotte. After all I'm formerly an orphan who is Magialca's butler right now.】

Lolotte smiled wryly, but putting aside his ability as a Drag-Knight, his skill as a commander was really something.

For the time being they followed his recommendation and split up to the double rooms they were guided to and put down their luggage.

After Lisha entered the guest room with Krulcifer, she spontaneously sat down on the bed.

She somehow endured with her spirit, but she was feeling exhaustion that made it hard to even stand.

「The situation is calmer than expected. Of course I mean it in a good way.】

Krulcifer took off her pilot suit that was soaked in sweat and wiped her body while brushing up her blue hair.

Now that all the Seven Dragon Paladins were captured, they had assumed that the worst situation with more pressing time limit was going on.

But in reality, the situation might be unexpected for the Lords too.

Most likely, they should be convinced of victory by the time they seized the Seven Dragon Paladins.

At the very least they were estimating that this base would collapse, because that was what Lisha and the others were thinking too.

But, a small mercy, that underestimation brought about this stalemate.

On the contrary it could be seen that Magialca and Singlen had even foreseen the hopeless situation where they were captured and had advised their confidantes beforehand.

Those two didn't seem really proactive in the capture of the Ruins, but it seemed they were fixing their aim at the crucial Avalon and thoroughly prepared.

「But, we mustn't let our guards down as expected—or rather, this situation is nothing more than a slight mitigation of the hopelessness.」

Krulcifer who finished changing into the Academy uniform she brought sighed once more.

「Yeah, that threat of the Lords, the twelve days countdown is also starting to show effect in each country. Perhaps those who submit to their pressure and refuse cooperating with other countries might appear.」

Lisha grinded her teeth in vexation and recalled the report in the New Kingdom.

The incident where an abyss that imitated the Lord, Listelka's appearance—a Shadow was commanding to present the head of Queen Raffi as well as other royalties and nobles.

If they became a sacrifice, the Lords said that they wouldn't lay their hands on the people.

It was a demand that was just too tyrannical and unreasonable, but the low-ranked nobles and the people might submit to that pressure and started saying to sacrifice the Queen.

They understood that it was the Lord's aim for that to happen and it made them uneasy, but it was troublesome because it couldn't be disregarded completely.

「When thinking about that, as expected I cannot be in the mood of resting at ease.」

「Even so—we have to rest. That is more or less the duty of me the Princess of the New Kingdom.」

Lisha took a deep breath and laid down while looking up to the ceiling.

This severe tension and anxiety.

Even so, in order to reach out to the next hope, she closed her eyes in an attempt to recover her body.

## Part 2

A few hours later after that.

Lisha and others were called by the commander representative of the expeditionary force, Lolotte, and they showed up at dinner.

「It's just a crude meal, but please pardon us because this is a battlefield.」

Said Lolotte humbly, but the meal was actually extravagant enough.

It also showed the significance of Magialca's skill in stocking up a lot of food beforehand and how calm the present situation of the battle was.

Warm soup, desalinated meat and bread, cheese and wine. While having that menu as a meal, Lisha and the others listened to the details of the battle situation.

The number of the Abyss protecting the area around the old castle was still a lot, even so they had been decreased until less than half.

Avalon was similar to other Ruins too. It was divided by floors, and it seemed that a control room existed in the latter half part that was called as the centre.

In order to prevent anyone else from reaching there, the Lords sealed the Seven Dragon Paladins, and in order to slow down the reinforcement's arrival, they spread out the news of purging the royalties and nobles.

Lisha and the others had heard until that point to a certain degree, there was no mistake in their prediction.

「In the first place, how did the Seven Dragon Paladins get captured? I believe it was impossible for people with their strength to be defeated obediently though?」

Celis's blunt question was answered by Lolotte with a slightly troubled look.

「This is something that isn't confirmed, but those Lords, it seems they are

able to use a part of the Ruin's functions due to the surgery called Baptism.]

The first imperial princess Listelka, as the shrine maiden of oracle, she could obtain information from Avalon and perform simple control.

The third imperial princess Hayes possessed the right of control of the Gear Leaders in each Ruin.

And then—the second imperial princess Aeril who was posing as an existence called Coral who was the aide of the Vanheim Principality's Seven Dragon Paladin, was predicted to be able to perform manipulation of perception.

「In the first place Magialca was suspecting Sir Coral. And so, she ordered us, her servants, to secretly observe his movements. That was how we realized her true identity along with her betrayal.」

「To think, that guy was someone of the enemy's side.....」

Lisha muttered in disbelief.

She and the others had received help from Aeril many times. A complicated emotion colored her face.

「I believe that <sup>Aeril</sup>she also noticed our observations on her. I believe that was why she couldn't take any actions that were too conspicuous, but it seemed that she finally used her trump card.」

「Is Lu-chan and the others, safe?」

Philuffy who had dinner with a portion for five people just as offered suddenly interrupted the flow of the conversation and asked.

In response, Lolotte pondered for a while and before long he silently lifted his face.

「Honestly speaking, right now we don't know anything. Because although we manage to maintain the frontline, embarrassingly that is the best that we can do.」

By all rights, he wanted to rescue the Seven Dragon Paladins and capture Avalon that lay underground the old castle.

But, because a lot more of the Abyss and traps were lurking in the old castle,

they were lacking in combat force to assault until that far at present.

If they rashly attacked repeatedly and got exhausted, then got counterattacked and their base got taken away, then their defeat would be set in stone.

Thus, their situation right now was one where it was full of hardships to even gather information of the enemy camp.

「However, if I'm allowed to speak my personal opinion, I believe that the possibility is high that Lux-san is alive at the very least. After all, for the Lords he will be useful as a hostage against the remaining threat of you all, Syvalles of the New Kingdom.」

「I see.」

Lisha muttered while looking down, then she immediately opened her crimson eyes.

「So in short it's like this. At this point in time, it will depends on our activity. You too were also waiting for our arrival.」

「Yes, it's just as your highness says.」

Lolotte nodded with his eyebrows lowered apologetically.

「Unfortunately my aptitude for Drag-Rides is low, and the best I can do is wearing a general purpose type Drake. With Sir Zweigberk alone as a Divine Drag-Ride user, the best we can do is only to defend the fortress.」

「Seven days remaining until the end of the countdown that the Lords decided. Before that we will infiltrate into the old castle, gather information, and take back the Seven Dragon Paladins. Is it fine to consider that as what we should do?」

When Krulcifer concluded like that, Lolotte quietly bowed in consent.

「We will give support as much as possible with this base as the center. If you have any needs, whether it's personnel or material, then please tell me whatever it is. Please lend us the strength of you all.」

「Leave it to us! We will rescue Lux—the Seven Dragon Paladins for sure!」

Lisha yelled to fire up herself and the others as the Princess of the New Kingdom.

The other three girls also nodded in agreement to that.

「Yes, we will achieve that without fail. It's for the sake of none other but ourselves.」

「You're right. If we cannot save him here, we won't have any face to look at everyone in the Academy.」

「I want to, meet Lu-chan quickly.」

Krulcifer, Celis, and Philuffy each spoke their resolve and then they broke up from dinner.

The seven days in the abandoned capital Guernica that would decide the fate of the world.

The long night that informed the beginning of that was deepening quietly like the calm before the storm.

## Part 3

「Was it fine, Listelka-sama?」

Around that time when Lisha and the others were showing their motivation to capture Avalon and take back the Seven Dragon Paladins.

Inside a bedroom in the old castle that existed a few kl ahead, Listelka was stripping off her clothes.

「What is it, Mishis? It's an unclear question coming from the wise you. I won't be angry even if you stop acting so reserved you know? Though it will be a different matter if it's an insult against Fugil.」

Listelka said that with a teasing smile. Her cheeks were faintly dyed red.

Soft white skin that looked like even the circulating blood underneath would become visible.

Long silver hair swaying softly.

And then her purity that was the same like the pure white underwear she was wearing.

The bedroom where Listelka and Mishis were inside was different from the bedroom of Lux and Aeril.

The surroundings and inside of the old castle were crowded with a lot of traps and brutal Abyss, but several safe zones existed. The Abyss wouldn't get near those zones.

Listelka was able to perceive those zones due to the power she obtained from Baptism—the ability to govern a part of Avalon's system.

They had gathered food and clothing from each Ruin into that safe zone beforehand to construct a temporary base.

「.....」

Inside that room, Mishis was hesitating with her master's words before she finally formed her words in the end.

「It might be slightly related. It's about the permission to entrust him to her highness Aeril.」

「Aah, you mean that Lux Arcadia.」

「Yes.」

The maid Mishis immediately nodded at the voice of imperial princess Listelka.

「Although he has the Wedge put on him, isn't it a bit dangerous to use him as a pawn? That is what I think.」

「Perhaps so.」

The girl smiled as though playing the fool.

After finishing changing into her sleepwear, she sat down on the bed that had a canopy attached.

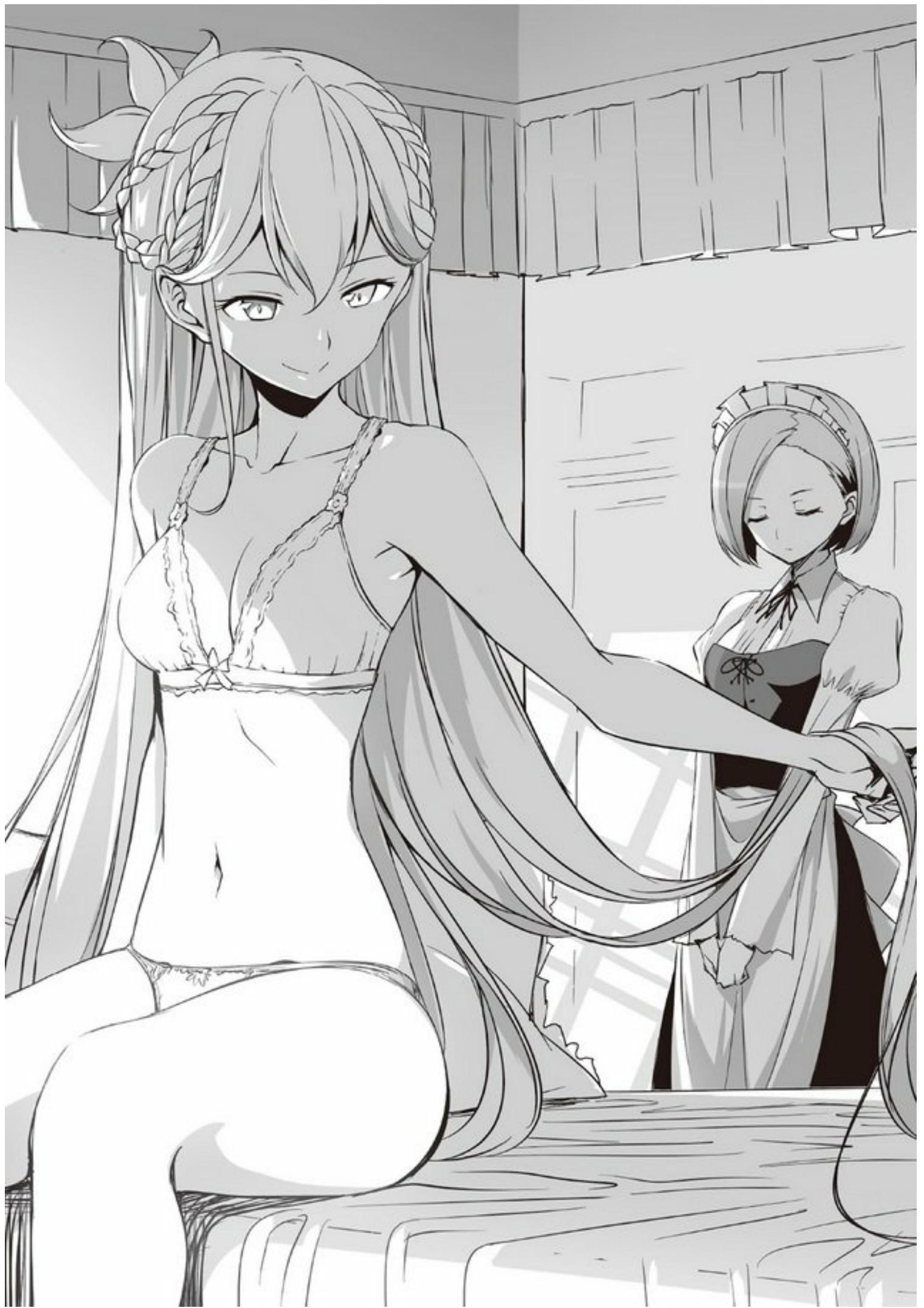
「I can comprehend how he can become a central figure even among the Seven Dragon Paladins with his potential that cannot be measured. He is far from being a match against Fugil, but he seems quite competent. Though his appearance looks like an unreliable boy.」

「In that case—why did your highness make that decision?」

Mishis's question was extremely calm. Listelka lightly stretched herself.

‘Fua.....’, she lightly put her hand over her lips and yawned. It was a lovely gesture befitting her age.

「Well, there is also how I chose Fugil, but it is just as I said before, it's like my present to Aeril. Unlike Hayes, that delinquent girl, she was faking herself for a few months alone and accomplished her mission for us.」



「.....」

「Besides, I also understand Aeril's feelings a little. We too are grown women of that age. It is in our instinct to search for the person who will become our pair. Even the imperial princess of the beginning who once reigned in the past—Arshalia was also said to welcome a young man who was called as the White Hero to be her close aide. Originally it was a love of different social status.....there is also an aspect to it that seems similar to my feelings towards Fugil.」

「I see, your highness.」

「You still cannot be convinced with only this answer?」

Listelka let out a sigh 'fuu' and let herself fall on the bed to lie spread-eagled.

Mishis approached Listelka's side and put a blanket over her. And then next Mishis calmly formed her words.

「I have a tinge of anxiety remaining. Surely in this capture of Avalon, we will have to pay a considerable effort even for us the Lords. Although we possess enough combat force, it's also a fact that it will be better to spare some strength in reserve. In that case, I am aware that using him—Lux Arcadia as a pawn is an excellent plan.」

「You are worried for the slightest chance of his collar getting taken off aren't you?」

When Listelka pointed that out, Mishis nodded briskly with a serious face.

The collar of Wedge would generate electricity if the wearer went against orders, harbored rebellious thoughts, tried to take it off, or if the collar simply got hit by a strong impact. But Mishis was apprehensive to a certain situation.

The content of her apprehension would also become doubt and insult towards the imperial princesses in a sense.

It was something that made her hesitate to say easily.

「Is it the possibility of Aeril betraying and stealing a march on us to control Avalon with him?」

「.....!？」

A sentence was spoken from those lovely lips that cut into the heart of the matter.

The content of those words caused even Mishis whose face was like an iron mask to become speechless spontaneously.

It was bull's eye.

Aeril had been working as a spy away from the Lords for too long a time.

She was blending into the heart of the world alliance so much so that she wasn't doubted by almost anyone.

The possibility of someone compassionate like her giving help to them wasn't zero.

「There is no need to worry Mishis. It's impossible for Aeril to betray us. After all, that child is also the same like me and Hayes. She remembers the tragedy of the past.」

「.....」

「Just what kind of experience we went through because of that family of traitors.....when thinking about it, don't you think it's foolish to distrust her?」

Listelka let out grief to show on her face seen from the side. Mishis couldn't say anything to that.

The absolute rule that conquered over the world, the imperial family of the Holy Arcadia Empire.

Due to the rebellion of the family of traitors, the atrocity of the counterattack was running rampant to the extreme.

In the far away past, Listelka and the others escaped the disaster by sleeping inside the hibernation pods for the use of the imperial family, but the hell they acutely went through to reach that point was still fresh in their memories.

She also remembered how a few hundred years later, that pod was discovered by a descendant of the family of traitors and once more she almost got killed, but Fugil saved her in the nick of time.

She could remember them all as though they happened only yesterday.

「Either way, in this world there is no place where we belong anymore. There is only this Ruin, only the pride in the form of the legacy of ruler that our ancestors left behind for us.」

The imperial princess muttered earnestly, her hand touching her chest.

「That's why, I swear I will obtain Avalon no matter what I have to do. That should be the correct action.」

「That's—」

「At present, the Wedges are set up so only us, the three imperial princesses, can take them off, isn't that right?」

Mishis nodded silently.

The Wedges were a part of Avalon. Once it was put on, it was set up so the third electric shock would give instant death as long as the collar wasn't taken off.

Aeril took off Lux's collar once in order to reset the electric shock count that had reached two due to Hayes.

Listelka and Mishis also knew about it through hearing it from Aeril herself.

「But regarding Lux Arcadia, the Wedge is already set so even if it is Aeril herself who tries to take it off, an electric shock that will grant instant death will suddenly flow. Even the person who tries to take it off will die from the aftershock of the electricity. That's why—there won't be any problem at all.」

「—!？」

Mishis spontaneously felt a chill in her spine seeing that pure smile.

In a glance she was an elegant girl, but she was hiding enough cruelty as a ruler.

Listelka didn't even tell Aeril how she had changed the settings.

Even in the worst case that she attempted to take off the collar of Lux and the other Seven Dragon Paladins, Aeril herself would also die instantly. She would be executed right on the spot.

「Besides, I have already thought up the countermeasure that I didn't tell to

even my little sisters. The plan of a ruler is arranged in such way that one will win no matter how the situation becomes. That is the basics. If the capture of Avalon advances by the pawn called Lux Arcadia, then one other secret plan that can destroy the world will be carried out.]

「.....」

She didn't have mercy even toward her own flesh and blood relative by not granting them important information.

And then, she was letting Aeril act while laying out even more traps.

Mishis felt a chill from fear that came from the bottom of her heart.

In that case, Mishis V Xfer who was serving this person could only pray.

That one of her masters, Aeril wouldn't think to quarrel with this terrifying ruler.

That Aeril wouldn't do anything like searching for a path that she should walk herself and chose it.

## Part 4

The remaining twelve days countdown that Listelka declared to the world.

It was a threat that the Lords would massacre the people if the delegation of all countries didn't present their heads at the abandoned capital.

The morning of the sixth day, the halfway point of the countdown, was visiting the old castle in the abandoned capital Guernica.

「N, nn.....」

The sunlight shining in from the gap of the ragged curtain woke Lux up.

The bedroom had a single bed with canopy attached.

Aeril slept there while Lux was sleeping on the sofa beside it.

He was wearing a sleep-wear with thin fabric that he was given last night.

When he confirmed the time using his pocket watch—it was six in the morning.

From the point of view of Lux who usually woke up at five for doing chores and morning training, he had overslept.

Even so, there was no doubt that it was morning, but as expected it was strange.

Outside the curtain—at the ruined castle town that could be seen from the old castle, there were the Abyss strutting around on the ground and in the sky.

He was inside the enemy's castle, he was in a position of changing sides to the enemy camp, he was also in a situation where he exchanged a secret agreement to allow Aeril to control Avalon.

Lux thought that he wouldn't be able to get even a wink of sleep from nervousness, but when he noticed he had fallen asleep.

Perhaps he was surprisingly tired.

Or perhaps in his heart he was trusting Aeril.

「Even if that's the case, I cannot be so relaxed.....」

The other collar that was put on his neck—the binding called Wedge, with its existence death was constantly beside him.

There was also the other Seven Dragon Paladins who were still captured.

And also the existences of Listelka, Hayes, and Fugil.

And then the arrival of Lisha and the others, the members of Syvalles, that most likely wouldn't be long, and the capture of Avalon—

The situation changed every second. If even a single gear went out of place, destruction would wait right away.

「—Fuu」

Although, it would be no use even if he brooded too much right now.

Whether it was the chore works that Lux had done or the large-scale plan like the revolution in the Old Empire, his actions to reach until the finish point was the same.

He could only accomplish it by accumulating steady progress before his eyes and cleared them.

Thus, first, Lux tried to search for Aeril in order to know his objective for now.

(Somehow, even in this kind of situation, I'm still staying together with a girl huh.....)

Well, even in the Academy he was staying in the same room as Philuffy at the beginning. It also felt like it was too late already to worry about that now, but it couldn't be helped that he was conscious of it because he was a man in puberty.

He timidly peeked at the bed, but Aeril wasn't there.

「Eh—?」

Strange.

Aeril staying together with Lux should be for the sake of their 『agreement』 and also for her to monitor Lux, and yet she went away somewhere.

(Don't tell me, was our plan found out by Listelka? Or perhaps Hayes is trying to circumvent us?)

There was also a possibility that the alliance army launched a surprise attack in the early morning and Aeril joined the battle.

If the Lords met difficulty in dealing with that, it might be a chance for Lux to find an opening for escape and joined up with the Seven Dragon Paladins.

Although, if he tried to take off the Wedges of the other Seven Dragon Paladins, both would get shocked with electricity together so it was impossible.

(The development might change faster than expected. As expected this should be too early for Lisha-sama and the others to come already but—)

Lux changed into his pilot suit while reaching his hand to the door to leave this bedroom.

There would be no turning back if he went outside as he pleased.

「-.....!？」

Should he keep his promise with Aeril, or should he risk danger to search for a path of escape?

At that time when Lux's thoughts were weighed in his heart and he hesitated, the doorknob in front of him turned and the door opened.

At that instant where he expected a shocking situation, a sight that was just too unexpected entered Lux's sight.

「Ah, good morning Lux-kun. Were you okay yesterday? Like your collar—」

「.....」

Apron figure.

Aeril who was wearing a pure white apron above her pilot suit was carrying a tray with a serious face.

There was fresh baked bread above the tray. It was accompanied with vegetable sticks, then sunny-side-up fried eggs that were roasted together with

bacon, soup, and glasses of water.

No matter how he looked at it, Aeril seemed to have just prepared breakfast. Lux could only stiffen with his eyes wide open.

「Eh? What's the matter Lux-kun? You don't need breakfast?」

「No, I can eat anytime but— That appearance.....」

「A,ahaha..... This kind of appearance while wearing a pilot suit, does it look a bit strange just as I thought? I suddenly thought to cook this morning so—」

Perhaps Aeril only noticed the unnaturalness of her appearance after this late, she grinned with her cheeks slightly reddening.

Somehow, thanks to the pilot suit that had a small surface area covered with fabric, her appearance emitted a mysterious sex appeal. Lux paid attention to not stare too hard towards her.

For the time being they moved to the table in the bedroom and had breakfast before the dishes became cold.

「Could it be that Aeril was the one who cooked this?」

Lux asked while eating breakfast.

「That, i, is it not delicious just as I thought? Perhaps it will be better if I just obediently leave the cooking to Mishis..... So it's a failure.....」

Her figure averting her gaze without confidence while casting down her gaze in embarrassment looked somewhat cute.

「No, it's really delicious. Somehow the taste loosened my tension, it's making me feel relieved.」

The dining hall in the Academy was also luxurious with delicious food, but this breakfast was just right for Lux.

「I see, I'm really glad. I also practiced to cook by myself in the military academy of Vanheim. Ah, I asked Mishis to bake the bread though.」



Aeril smiled while exhaling in relieve.

Her smiling face was really like a homely girl. Lux's heart throbbed hard seeing it.

「But, why did you intentionally cook this yourself? You weren't here when I woke up, so I thought to go looking for you.」

Lux casually asked to cover up that he was thinking of escaping. Aeril tilted her head slightly and thought.

After lightly nibbling on the bread and swallowing, she finally answered him.

「Ahaha, I wonder why. But perhaps, it was because I wanted to do it. Even I wanted to try once something like cooking for a friend. Surely—」

She looked vaguely nostalgic.

Aeril muttered with a distant gaze that seemed like she was harboring a longing.

She lived as an imperial family of the ancient era, then after that she lived while faking her own identity.

But, Aeril's smile when she was doing Academy activities together with Lux and the others might be her true feelings.

「Aeril, you wanted to try living normally?」

「Yes..... I was envious at everyone in your Academy, at Lisha-san and the others.」

Aeril replied with a lonely smile. Seeing that Lux was dazed.

He wondered whether this breakfast that she prepared by herself was also the expression of that feeling?

While thinking of such thing, Lux and Aeril quickly finished their breakfast.

## Part 5

「Then, Lux-kun, you prepare for the sortie while I go to check on the Seven Dragon Paladins for the moment. After that, Lux-kun and I will go to capture the surface level floor of Avalon with just us two. First I want to clear up the swarm of the Abyss under this old castle.」

Finally they would start capturing Avalon for real.

It seemed the first imperial princess Listelka was able to use a part of Avalon's functions using her ability to interfere with the Ruins that she obtained through Baptism, but there was a limit to that.

Naturally she didn't want to split her force just to clear up the Abyss.

(Should I feel happy about this?)

With this he would be lending a hand to the Lords, but he was relieved that he wouldn't need to attack the fortress where the alliance army was based at and fight his allies.

「I get it but..... is it okay, that Aeril will take your eyes off me?」

「Yes. Actually, I want to give the order『don't go out of this room』through the Wedge, but it will be troubling in the low chance that an accident occurs here, so I'll hold back from that. More importantly, I'm worried whether Hayes is meddling with the Seven Dragon Paladins or not.」

Certainly it might be just as she said.

It would be better if he could ask Aeril to check on them.

「Got it. I'll prepare while waiting.」

「Be careful okay, Lux-kun.」

Aeril left only those words behind and exited the bedroom.

「Or perhaps, she is giving me time to change?」

Lux was saying that to himself while he finished changing his clothes. A few minutes later, Aeril returned while carrying a sword belt. She handed Lux his Sword Device.

General purpose Drag-Ride, Wyvern, and the Divine Drag-Ride, Bahamut.

And then Aeril herself was also bringing two Sword Devices in her sword belt.

「Your preparations are finished then. Also, I prepared various things like a bit of food, a pocket watch, a map, lamp, and towel. Here.」

Aeril also handed a pouch that was filled with those things to Lux with a somewhat cheerful look.

「Thank you Aeril.」

「.....? What's the matter Lux-kun?」

Aeril's eyes opened wide in surprise at the thanks that came from Lux's mouth.

「It's about Hayes. Thanks for your consideration so that I, and also the Seven Dragon Paladins, don't get attacked by her.」

「.....Haa, you are really a strange person. In this situation you are threatened by me and even got forced to carry out an act of treachery, do you understand that?」

「That might be so.」

Lux put on a smile and slowly pulled out his Sword Device from the sheath.

When he summoned Wyvern using the passcode, Aeril also followed his movement in response.

「—Come, the winged dragon of crest that is the symbol of power. Obey my sword and soar, EX Wyvern!」

A large Drag-Ride with streamlined shape that was a size larger than Lux's Wyvern was summoned, and it transformed into an armor that covered her body.

「Then, let's go. First is going to the underground of the old castle—to open the route until Avalon. Is that okay?」

Lux nodded briefly, then the door was opened and the two flew away.

They passed through a corridor and descended down the stair, then they opened the door of the reception hall. There they faced the Abyss that appeared.

# Episode 3 – The Other Lord

## Part 1

Three days before Lux and Aeril started conquering Avalon, in the Academy.

While the main force of Syvalles sallied out in addition to the provocation of the Lords using Shadows gaining strength, the Academy was filled with sorrowful silence.

「I have braced myself, but I didn't think that it would be this much.」

「Yes. But, perhaps this is natural.」

Inside the Academy grounds, in an underground room of the fourth Drag-Ride hangar.

Airi and Noct were making preparations for traveling there.

「After all, Nii-san, Lisha-sama, and the others have all left. The Triad is working hard to consolidate the remaining students but—」

「Yes. Both Sharis and Tillfur are doing their best. However, Airi—are you really going to the abandoned capital too?」

「Yes.」

Airi immediately replied with a nod at Noct's calm question.

The abandoned capital of the Marcafal Kingdom, Guernica.

Airi would also head to the old castle that was keeping Avalon underground it.

Airi normally accompanied Lisha and the others to carry out Syvalles's information gathering role, but as expected, this time she was stopped from

going by the headmaster Relie.

It was only natural. It would be too dangerous where even the Triad wouldn't have any leeway to protect Airi.

Far from being any help, there was high likelihood that she would serve as Lux's Achilles' heel.

No matter how worried she was about Lux, it would be pointless if she definitely would become a hindrance.

But, other than her feeling, Airi had another different belief of her own. She decided to accompany the Triad and head to rescue Lux.

「Soffice wanted my existence—the bloodline of Arcadia to liberate the Ruin. Similarly like that, there is a possibility that my blood will be useful in the capture of Avalon. Now that Nii-san.....the Seven Dragon Paladins has fallen into the enemy's hand, with me heading towards there for the capture of Avalon, the calculation of the Lords might get derailed. And then—」

She conveyed her words exactly like she had just told Relie a bit before this to Noct beside her.

In order to show her own resolve towards the girl who was earnestly worrying about her who was her best friend.

「If the Lords realize my existence is nearby Avalon, they will surely perceive me as a hindrance. In other words, I can serve as bait.」

「-.....!？」

The usual calm expression of Noct who heard that crumbled and showed her shock.

There was no positive proof of that, but it might be effective.

Perhaps it might divert the enemy's attention and become a key to making an opening to capture Avalon and take back Lux. But,

「Can you agree with my thinking, Noct?」

「.....No. Even without that, the place we will be going to is already worthy to be regarded as extremely dangerous. It's different from everything until now,

the enemy is the Lords and high class Abyss. There won't be any leeway there to protect others.]

Noct told that fact and looked down.

That gesture looked like she was ashamed of her lack of strength, that she couldn't promise to protect Airi.

「I received permission from Relie-san. She said that she cannot allow me if thinking of Onii-san's sake, but even the headmaster has a weak point.】

「That's—」

Airi showed a vaguely mischievous smile and continued.

「There is no way Relie-san can stop my proposal. She herself risked her life for the sake of her little sister—for Philuffy-san, that she would even betray the New Kingdom to try and save her. There is no way someone who understands the importance of family by that much won't be able to understand my feelings.】

「But, Airi】

「Please don't stop me. After all, my inability to fight as a Drag-Knight is incomparable with the powerlessness that Noct is feeling.】

「——】

Noct who heard that lost her words.

Strictly speaking, Noct who was a member of Syvalles and Airi who was a civil official had different roles.

That was why, Noct could also point out that in the first place it was strange for Airi to think about such thing.

But, for Airi, the point was whether she could become strength for her big brother or not right now.

Because she had been saved by Lux until now and received a place to belong from him that she couldn't forgive herself for being unable to do anything.

Noct could understand her feeling as her best friend.

「I'm, disqualified as a servant. I have to consider the will of other people as I'm someone serving the Baltshift house.】

「I'm sorry that I give you nothing but trouble. But, I'm thankful.」

「Yes. That's right isn't it?」

Noct responded to Airi's wry smile with a rare smile of her own.

「I have also become really used to Airi's selfishness. But, there is no one else who can keep up with you other than me. That's why, I'll accompany you just like usual, with my life on the line.」

「Thank you very much, Noct.」

Airi gently took Noct's hand and expressed her thanks filled with a flood of emotions.

She was greatly worried of Airi's safety, and on top of that she accepted her from her heart.

「—Good grief, have you two finished talking?」

「We also finished preparing y'knoow!」

At that time, the remaining Triad, Sharis and Tillfur arrived at the underground room with small footsteps.

It seemed they were right outside the door, but they read the atmosphere and waited quietly.

「Will the headmaster be alright? If all of us go away—」

「It seems the big shots of the Four Great Nobles are helping out with various things. The New Kingdom also has their hands full, but this place is also quite an important location after all.」

Because this place also doubled as a defense point against the Ruin, Garden, as expected it seemed there was a need to make the security heavier than usual.

Instead of Balzeride, the person who would be the next head of the Kreutzer house, called Dig Kreutzer, seemed to take command of the guards. (TN: Don't know if this is really a different person from Sieg Kreutzer that was mentioned in vol 12 or the author changed the name)

「I feel uneasy towards that house somehow though. But it can't be helped

because this is an emergency situation.]

「Yeah, even my father who is the military's deputy commander has his hands full protecting the royal capital right now. Also—」

Tillfur folded her hands behind her head while sighing.

Sharis nodded in agreement to her statement, and then she lifted her face.

Right after that, *uijin* a particular mechanical sound could be heard from the adjacent room.

The Ruin's device that was brought here from the solitary island where Yoruka was sleeping—the hibernation pod that could also be used for healing was making sounds there.

「According to the description in the ancient document that missy Airi deciphered, it should be finished around this time if I remember it right.」

「Let's go meet her. We need to—」

「There is no need for that.」

Airi said that, but before she could exit the room, the door of the room opened first.

The one who appeared was a girl with beautiful black hair and limbs that were supple like a beast—Kirihibe Yoruka.

「Because my consciousness had returned slightly before the treatment was finished.」

After treating Philuffy and Rosa Granhide, the hibernation pod that was finally empty had nearly ran out of energy, so the time necessary for healing got longer.

In order to quickly heal the wound from her deadly battle against Singlen that made her unable to fight, Yoruka was entered into the pod after the previous battle.

「Then, let's rush to Aruji-sama's side right away. If there is a high possibility we can save him only by us risking our life, then it's something cheap.」

Yoruka declared that along with a carefree smile.

Airi and the Triad looked at each other's faces, then they let out an exasperated sigh.

In front of this Empire's Assassin Blade, it felt like their resolve just now seemed stupid.

「Let's see. If missy Yoruka is with us then it will be like an army of a thousand is accompanying us. Depending on your condition though, perhaps you won't be able to go with us or you may need to have a rest for several days—」

「There is no need for that. Where could my Sword Device be?」

「It's right here. More importantly please wear clothes. We, who are looking, are the ones that are embarrassed.....」

Airi sighed while handing over the Sword Device of Yato no Kami.

But, she was unable to look straight at Yoruka's nakedness and she averted her eyes with blushing cheeks.

「Well, what should I say, what a nice body eeeh..... Your skin is also pretty, like this perhaps Lux-chi won't stand a chance ain't he? Aaa.....!」

After Tillfur muttered somewhat despondently, Sharis also nodded with a conflicted expression.

「Yeah, this is a bit troubling. Not just her skill as a Drag-Knight, I cannot imagine winning at all even in that aspect—」

「Yes. It will be fine Sharis. I believe you will put up a good fight if it is just breasts, that is my opinion, who has been watching you for many years.」

「I, is that so? Wait, don't compare my naked body with her as you please!」

Sharis slightly showed an expression of expectation, but she then got flustered.



Yoruka who was watching the exchange of the three changed into the pilot suit handed to her while speaking with a serious face.

「There is no problem. There would be nothing better than having as many concubines as possible for Aruji-sama. In my eyes, the three of you are qualified enough to be candidates.」

「Wwha-!?」

「Tha, that's—is, that so?」

「Yes. Do you mean, even me?」

Yoruka's explosive statement that was dropped suddenly shocked Tillfur, flustered Sharis, and at the end Noct was bashful even with her face staying calm.

At that time when a really complicated silence was filling the place, a voice resounded inside the underground room.

「Wai-, everyone, please stop joking around! What are you all thinking when the situation is like this!?」

Airi rebuked. The Triad smiled wryly while apologizing while Yoruka was tilting her head without any comprehension at all why she was scolded.

The conversation that smashed apart the tension until now caused Airi's shoulders to drop in exhaustion.

She was exasperated of them from the bottom of her heart.

But, at the same time she also felt happy somehow.

For being able to be together with trusted comrades like this.

To be able to talk like normal, and laugh with each other before the battle.

(It's really, happiness. Something like this)

Exactly because she was in the same position of criminal like Lux, that she strongly thought that.

And then, that she could stay with not just the Triad, but also with Yoruka was thanks to Lux.

Yoruka seemed to wonder about Airi who was silent like that and she suddenly peered into her face.

「Are you all right Airi-san? Among royalties, marriage between blood relatives isn't that unusual so—」

「What kind of consideration is that!?」

Airi responded with a bright red face at Yoruka's whisper.

Surely Lux also felt like this towards her usually.

「Ahahaha. Then, seeing that our mood has also loosened up, let's go already. We are taking him back—our important comrade.」

The Triad's leader Sharis concluded the talk and then everyone outfitted themselves.

Because their stamina would be consumed considerably through the travel, they would ask other members of Syvalles to transport them until the border and then enter into the Marcafal Kingdom.

It had been two days since Lisha and the others had departed, before Airi and the others left the New Kingdom.

## Part 2

On the other hand, at the Marcafal Kingdom, the abandoned capital Guernica at present.

The entrance of the old castle's first floor.

Lux and Aeril eliminated the swarm of the Abyss taking position in the reception hall and searched for the route to the stairs that continued to the underground.

At a glance, it seemed to be an old castle that was only big, but the complicated structure made it really troublesome.

The two of them had already crushed more than ten of the Abyss by cooperating with each other, but they still couldn't let their guard down.

They didn't get caught by traps thanks to the information that Aeril had, but it seemed that they would come out into an unconfirmed area ahead of here.

「Fuu, should we rest for a bit? If I remember right, there should be a safe zone around here.」

Three days after Airi and the others departed from the Academy, Lux and Aeril were capturing Avalon just as instructed.

If they could break through the surface level floor and opened the gate to the deepest part, they would be able to infiltrate into the deep level floor where the important locations were lined up.

It seemed the gate was hidden inside a complicated underground maze, so first they had to search for it.

It seemed Hayes was attacking the fortress of the world alliance like usual, while Magialca's aide Lolotte and Singlen's aide Zweigbergk, with the White Ridge Knight Order under his command, were facing her.

Hayes was taking command of the Abyss in order to stop their advance, while in the meantime Aeril and Lux were opening the path to Avalon.

The first imperial princess Listelka was monitoring both sides from the airborne ship called Heaven Palace while giving orders.

The guard of Listelka herself was Fugil.

The one taking care of Listelka's daily necessities and conveyed information to Hayes and Aeril was the maid Mishis.

The remaining members of the Seven Dragon Paladins were moved into the chapel inside the old castle's grounds.

Other than Lux, they were all treated simply as hostages. It seemed the remnants of Dragon Marauder that had lost their leaders were ordered to watch over them.

「About now, the situation should be like that. The faction of us, the Lords is currently—」

Aeril said that while lightly picking up the sandwich she brought here.

A few hours had already passed since they started to have a rest inside a small room that was a safe zone where the Abyss wouldn't attack them.

Because sometimes Aeril was also using a horn flute, they weren't particularly troubled in battle, but because there were also Abyss that didn't possess hearing senses and the like, they couldn't let their guard down.

「Can I ask a question? About Avalon—」

「Please. I'll answer if it's something within the tolerable scope.」

A question suddenly crossed Lux's mind.

After receiving Aeril's permission, he spoke it out.

「Why is even the original owners of the Ruins, the Lords, also attacked by the Abyss like this? The matter of the Ruins are also like that, isn't it strange?」

「As I thought, you think so.」

Aeril who heard that answered with a troubled smile.

「If it's only the defense function to repel intruders from the outside being active, at the very least we shouldn't be attacked like this.」

Aeril sat down on a chair inside the dilapidated room while looking up to the ceiling with a sigh.

「I think that most likely, it was like that from the very beginning. Surely the Abyss at first were made and then used in order to annihilate our opponents. But one day, someone overwrote their directives. In the end, they became something that would attack anyone without discrimination.」

「.....That's, could it be the fault of my ancestors?」

The family of the Arcadia Empire that was once nothing more than a weak and small country.

They then ruled over the world, but when they had no more enemies, domination and disparity were born among themselves.

The commoners who were suffering from the tyranny, oppression, and unjust exploitation rebelled against the privileged class, the Lords, and caused a revolution.

The ancestors of Lux and Airi who caused that were called the 『family of traitors』.

From all the information until now, that was the conjecture Lux made about the beginning of the Arcadia Empire that was destroyed five years ago.

That was why Hayes hated Lux who was a descendant of the family of traitors.

「Perhaps. Hayes is especially under that impression, but personally I cannot say anything for sure. Because, even if, for example, they reached Avalon and rewrote the system, then shouldn't they set it so that only their bloodline would be safe?」

「.....」

Lux also agreed with Aeril's thinking.

However, if that was the case then there was a strange mystery remaining.

There was an existence who transformed the original nature of the Abyss at

the beginning and changed them into measures to prevent intrusion into the Ruins.

Who could that be?

With what kind of objective did they do that? It was unknown.

「But, I have a bit of a suspicion. Perhaps, that defense system of the Ruins is—」

At that moment when Aeril was talking with a serious face, a sound suddenly came into their hearing.

—

- Uil—oooOOOO.\*

—

It was a reverberation of dark evil omen that was containing killing intent.

It was a strange noise that was clearly different from the sound of the Abyss in the area.

「This presence—don't tell me, Sacred Eclipse has revived!?!」

「.....!？」

Seeing Aeril's tense expression, Lux also spontaneously held his breath.

Sacred Eclipse was the greatest and strongest Ragnarok that could resurrect many times.

It had been defeated several times, but each time it was resurrected with new strength endowed onto it.

If it reappeared here—in Avalon, there was a high chance they would encounter it.

But, when they stopped making noises and focused their ears, this time they could hear a different sound.

A systematic sound of machine—the driving sound of a Drag-Ride.

「—!？」

It seemed that the remaining forces of Dragon Marauder that lost their leaders had joined under Listelka's banner, but it was impossible for them to come until here without an order. In other words,

「Lux-kun! Run!」

The room's door was smashed faster than Lux could stand ready in response to Aeril's voice and the 『answer』 appeared.

A violet wire chain with a pointy tip that was like a stake.

It was the special armament of Philuffy's Divine Drag-Ride Typhon, Pile Anchor.

They unsheathed their Sword Devices reflexively, but they didn't make it in time.

Lux's body was entwined by that wire and he was pulled in the blink of an eye.

Outside the room, Philuffy wearing Typhon was there as expected.

「Lu-chan. Got you.」

「That's splendid, Philuffy.」

The voice of the girl who always looked absentminded and followed her own pace.

Furthermore the dignified voice that came from her side caused Lux's eyes to open wide.

The one who was together with Philuffy was Celis wearing Lindwurm.

The two suddenly showed a gentle smile, perhaps because they felt relaxed with this reunion.

「Philuffy! Celis-senpai! How are you two—!?」

Lux reflexively raised his voice and asked.

「Because, Lu-chan's smell was there.」

His childhood friend said that as though it was only natural.

「Lisha and Krulcifer are luring away Hayes's army for us. Thanks to that an

opening to infiltrate into here was created.]

Celis spoke of the sequence of events until now with orderly chronology.

The arrival of Lisha and the others should be the day before yesterday at the earliest, but it seemed they greatly changed the battle situation in this short time.

At the very least, they managed to slip through the defense line of the old castle's surroundings and went into a hot pursuit until this corridor in one go. Their ability that allowed such thing wasn't just for show.

Or perhaps, the girls' strong will to take back Lux no matter what was what allowed them to do that.

In any case, from the result it could be said that Listelka's wariness that considered Lisha and the others, who were still at large, to be her greatest obstacle was correct.

Listelka's miscalculation was just one.

The girls who should be just disposable pieces that she made use of to capture numerous Ruins until now had slipped through many deathly situations together with Lux—their strength had grown surpassing her imagination.

「Philuffy! You take Lux and retreat. I will hold back the pursuer.」

「Wait both of you! If I leave this place—」

The restriction of the Wedge would shock him with electricity if he got too far away from this old castle, and above all else—the situation was bad right now.

He was in the middle of complying with his contract with Aeril of helping her to obtain Avalon.

「—My bad but, I'll have you two return him back you know?」

「.....-!？」

Aeril's clear voice cut through the cold air flowing in the corridor and reached Lux and co.

The moment they went on guard reflexively, a flash tore up the air and attacked towards Philuffy.

「.....I won't let you.」

Philuffy deployed her barrier in full power and blocked the flash that was drawing a straight line toward her.

But, the power that was focused into one point like a needle pierced the barrier. The tip of the beam twined around the right elbow of Typhon's armored arm.

「.....? What, are you doing?」

Philuffy was slightly in confusion while her expression was staying blank.

The answer immediately became clear.

That beam of light twining around the elbow slid straight to the side, and Typhon's armored arm moved to the outside.

Right after Typhon's posture of carrying Lux was broken, the twining beam of light came off and snatched away Lux with a speed that the eye couldn't follow.

「Wha-.....!？」

Aeril's movement that was excessively skilled like a superhuman feat stunned the two who witnessed it for the first time as expected.

Even Lux himself honestly didn't understand what happened.

He completely thought that it was a type of light beam, but it seemed that it was a whip that was conducting energy.

It was a weapon that was similar to Wire Tail, but its power, accuracy, and range were in a different dimension.

「So that's the true Divine Drag-Ride that you have. Coral—no, the Holy Arcadia Empire's second imperial princess, Aeril Vi Arcadia.」

「.....-!？」

Lux spontaneously looked behind him after hearing Celis's statement.

There was a figure there that wasn't wearing an EX Wyvern anymore, but an armor with a sharp and sublime form.

It was colored with two colors of black and light green. The top of its

shoulders that were modeled after serpent heads indicated its offensive attribute.

The whip special armament that the right hand was holding was tinged with faint yellow-green light. It was dangling to rest on the corridor's floor.

「Evil dragon Zahhak. That is the name of the Divine Drag-Ride I'm riding.」

「.....」

Celis who saw that showed a vigilant expression on her face.

In a battle between fellow Divine Drag-Rides, the one who understood the ability of the opponent's Divine Raiment would have a big advantage.

After all, no matter how strong someone was, they would be weak against an unknown technique.

But, Celis's hesitation lasted less than a second.

「Divine Gate」

Lindwurm's armor shined and a territory of light with the radius of several dozen ml appeared with Celis at the center.

With Lindwurm's Divine Raiment, it could move instantly within that area of light.

It was a powerful ability without equal that could completely rule over distance in a battle.

Thus, it would be really advantageous in defense and offense just by having it activated.

Furthermore, it also widened the array of Celis's tactics, like Double Attack, where she would throw a Dagger or the like and then use Divine Gate to approach the enemy at the right timing and executed a simultaneous attack.

「Then, show it to me. Your strength and resolve—」

Celis readied her Dagger to execute exactly that technique.

Beside her, Philuffy was looking for an opening to take Lux back. Aeril moved right in that instant.

「—My bad but, right now I cannot return him back to you two.」

Aeril declared with a serious face that was slightly colored with emptiness, and then she blew the horn flute she was covertly carrying.

Abyss wouldn't enter into the safe zone, but they could still come into this corridor.

Because there were still Abyss remaining inside the old castle, it was an effective tactic.

「Divine Gate!」

Celis who saw that moved to prevent the use of the horn flute.

She threw her Dagger while activating the instant movement Divine Raiment at the same time and flew through space.

At the same time she moved to Aeril's back and stabbed her huge lance—but,

「.....Wha-!?」

Celis's beautiful jade eyes opened wide in surprise.

A huge wall appeared before her eyes when she noticed and her full power thrust was blocked.

「Is this, Zahhak's Divine Raiment!? Creating material—no, it's teleportation!?」

That voice of Celis could be heard through the stone wall that existed behind Lux.

In addition, the Abyss—several Gargoyles and Chimeras passed through the ventilation and attacked Philuffy consecutively.

「My head.....hurts」

No matter how much resistance training she accumulated against the horn flute, the Abyss residing in Philuffy's body would still react.

「Phi-chan! Wait, right now I—」

Lux who saw that moved his hand towards the handle of his sword device to perform high-speed summoning for Bahamut, but Aeril stopped him from

assisting.

「I'm sorry but, you cannot help her. We have a different objective.」

Aeril's tone seemed ruthless.

However Lux sensed her intention under that mask.

「That Wedge will discharge electricity if you go against an order, but I don't want to do that. If you don't want them to get hurt then—」

「.....Understood.」

The objective of Lux and Aeril right now was, in the end, to open the route towards Avalon.

First they had to descend to the surface level floor and opened the portalteleport device that directly connected to the old castle.

Celis and Philuffy were surrounded by the Abyss, but if it was those two then they should be able to escape from this predicament.

On the contrary, if Aeril gave order to Lux, he would be forced to fight the two of them, so he could only think it as fortunate that he could avoid that.

(Phi-chan, Celis-senpai. Please be safe—)

Lux prayed inside his heart while he followed behind Aeril who flew using Zahhak.

「Let's head to the surface level floor like this and search for the portal that is connected to the old castle. Opening the gate to the deep level floor at the deepest part will be after that.」

The corridor at the first floor of the old castle that appeared like a dead-end.

A lever appeared when the wall was strongly pushed and Aeril pulled it.

When the wall in front of her shifted to the side, a new huge metallic door appeared at the other side too.

「This is, I have seen it several times in other Ruins—」

「Yes. The authority of the Key's Supervisor is needed, but Mishis already opened this one a long time ago. Everyone can enter here if they know the

place.]

However, because the Abyss would be redeployed immediately, it was hard to pass through here.

Therefore they were clearing up the path to here until now.

「Even so, Zahhak's user is actually Aeril.....」

「Lux-kun, you know about it?」

「Yes. When I fought Rosa's subordinate in the Campus Festival, you secretly helped us right? So you had watched over me all that time since then, right?」

「I guess.....」

The face of Aeril who replied so was still tense.

But, different from just now when she fought against Celis and Philuffy, he could faintly feel an irritated hesitation from her.

「By the way, Zahhak's Divine Raiment is <sup>Wicked Wisdom of Double Head</sup> Brain Hack. It has an ability that can interfere with the mind of the surrounding humans, and erase specific memories and perception.」

She explained her Divine Raiment that she had no time to explain until now.

In other words, before this Celis thought that a wall suddenly appeared because her memory that it had existed from the start behind Aeril had been erased.

It didn't have pure destructive power, but it was a Divine Raiment that seemed like it would have various applications.

For the time being they entered into a room that seemed to be a safe zone and took a breather.

「Let's continue after resting for a bit. It's fortunate that this entrance didn't get exposed to those girls. At this rate, the path to Avalon—」

「.....That's not permitted.」

An aloof presence and clear voice suddenly came from above.

Celis and Lindwurm appeared together with the territory of light that spread

before their eyes.

「Space teleportation using Divine Gate.....!? But, how did this place get—」

「It's me, you know?」

Aeril took a stance with her whip type special armament Dragon Edge Light Whip / Breath Whip. Immediately after that a thunderous sound struck from above like thunder.

The thick ceiling that was made from stone burst and scattered. The dust whirled at the same time with the impact.

「This is—Typhon's Biting Flare!?」

Typhon's special armament sent energy directly into the object or living thing that it grasped, which then made them explode.

The ceiling was destroyed by that and Philuffy descended from the upper floor.

「I even used my Divine Raiment to give them the slip, but they artfully let me guide them here huh. I got tricked.」

Aeril quickly took distance along with Lux. A bead of sweat trickled down from her forehead.

Celis who was isolated used instant teleportation with Lindwurm's Divine Raiment and linked up with Philuffy.

They quickly annihilated the Abyss, then they pinpointed the location of Lux and Aeril with Philuffy's superhuman hearing.

Right after Celis descended using Divine Gate, Philuffy also followed—that was how it went.

Thanks to that the location of the hidden door became completely exposed.

「That's not true. It's the fact that we completely fell into your trick. It was just, we desperately gave pursuit even then.」

「I won't, hand over Lu-chan.」

The entrance to the underground labyrinth was completely open.

The two groups faced each other once more in front of Avalon.

「It seems you are putting Lux under your control using that strange collar. Please wait. I will destroy it immediately.」

「.....My bad but, I cannot let you do that. I too have something that I must do no matter what.」

Against Celis who was emitting an extraordinary pressure, Aeril also responded with unyielding will.

Celis had grasped Lux's situation and awaited for a chance to attack, while Philuffy also similarly closed the distance little by little.

Right now Lux was in a position where he had to obey Aeril due to the Wedge and the contract he formed with her, but it wouldn't be easy to stop the serious Celis and Philuffy.

Normally, they were reassuring allies, but he once more realized how terrifying they were as enemies.

(Besides—it will be bad either way if we fought here.)

Lux's Wedge would discharge deathly electricity just from receiving a strong impact. And because it stuck tightly on his neck, it also couldn't be removed using Divine Gate.

Therefore no matter how he struggled here, he was unable to return to the world alliance's camp.

And yet Celis and Philuffy too surely wouldn't back down after coming this far.

(If we clash here, Aeril won't be able to fulfill her objective, Celis-senpai and Phi-chan will also get exhausted. No—in the worst case, it's possible that someone will even get seriously injured or die.)

Lux who thought that in a few moments immediately called out to the girls.

「Celis-senpai! Phi-chan! I'm fine, so withdraw from here! My collar cannot be removed anyway, and I also cannot leave from the old castle! At this rate I'll be forced to fight you two!」

The expression of Celis and Philuffy who heard that shook slightly.

But, Lux misjudged their determination.

「Understood. Then, it's decided. We will defeat the owner who controls it.」

「Yes. Until then Lu-chan just stay quietly.」

「-.....!？」

It was the worst reaction, but it was understandable.

The two didn't know about the deal that Aeril proposed to Lux, but even though those were Lux's words, there was no way they would follow such suggestion.

Naturally they would try to defeat Aeril who was controlling the Wedge.

『—It seems you are in trouble, my beloved little sister, Aeril.』

Suddenly a graceful voice came from somewhere, and the four people in that place held their breath.

「Listelka-neesama!? How are—!？」

『It's from the old castle to the Heaven Palace in the sky. After all I'm the shrine maiden of oracle who can interfere with Avalon's system. If there is a Ruin's monitoring system inside the room, I can grasp your movement to a certain degree. Though I only stayed quiet until now.』

「.....」

The true intention of Listelka calling out was unknown, but it was a terrifying fact.

If he talked about Aeril's plan to convince Celis and Philuffy, everything would be over for them.

Most likely Aeril didn't say anything to Celis and Philuffy because she was cautious of that.

「And—, what should I do now?」

When Aeril asked to guess at Listelka's true intention, her elder sister immediately gave instruction back.

『It's simple. Ignore them and advance forward. I trust you Aeril. Because of that, I want you to carry out your work properly.』

「But, these two aren't that easy of an opponent that we can just pass through—」

『It's fine. You can rest assured. I sent her just now, our protector for a thousand years—the empire's strongest Drag-Knight.』

「—!？」

The moment Aeril heard that voice resounding loudly, a shudder ran through her face.

She quickly swung her special armament, Breath Whip and the whip of light ran freely to every direction.

Celis and Philuffy put themselves on guard against that. Using that opening, Aeril pulled Lux's hand and descended to the underground.

Towards outside the room where Listelka's monitoring didn't reach—

「Wai-, what are you doing Aeril!?」

「This is bad! We have to shake them off and make them give up on you! No—let's search for the portal that connects to the old castle and lead them there! If not, they won't be able to escape anymore for sure!」

The expression of Aeril who was talking fast was filled with more urgency than anything until now.

「What.....do you mean?」

「It's also unexpected for me. I don't know if it's only Nee-san's whim or it's a trap in order to kill Celis-san and the others, but this is bad. It's bad that she is coming here!」

「Escaping is not permitted! I'll have you return Lux back!」

Celis's presence came from behind, flying after Aeril.

Although the passage was quiet wide, it was impossible to fly in full speed inside this complicated maze, even so Celis used Divine Gate a lot while passing through wall to pursue after Lux and Aeril.

「Lux-kun, too, quickly look for it! Most likely the portal to the old castle is being camouflaged as some kind of structure!」

「.....Got it!」

Lux was overwhelmed by that urgent sign and nodded.

He quickly defeated the Abyss standing in their way while paying attention to the pursuit of Celis and Philuffy.

Because he was wearing his Wyvern right now, he was uneasy about his firepower, even so he was able to fight quite a bit.

Aeril swung her whip to make an opening in the Abyss's guard while Lux finished them off in a flash.

Like that they were advancing deeper, before they suddenly ran into a strange hall.

「This place, what is—!?」

It was a large space with high ceiling that was illuminated with bluish white light.

There were countless transparent capsules along the wall that were jostled along with strange vibrations.

「This is one of the Abyss plants. It's continually producing the Abyss that protect the old castle's surroundings and Avalon. Although, there are several that are something like this and this is only one of them—」

Lux came to an understanding from Aeril's explanation.

Now that she mentioned it he remembered seeing a similar facility in the Ark.

This place wasn't as large in scale like there, but in exchange there was a wide space where there was nothing.

「This room isn't our destination, but perhaps there is a portal to return to the old castle here. Let's investigate it just in case. There might be Abyss lurking, so be careful—」

「Right.」

Lux nodded briskly and searched around the place that was dimly lit.

He slowly stepped firmly with his Drag-Ride's legs on the strange space where countless capsules were standing like pillars.

Perhaps Celis and Philuffy also bumped into the Abyss, because there wasn't any sign of them catching up soon.

For the time being the situation turned calm, so Lux asked about the matter from before.

『Aeril. About just now, is it okay for me to ask?』

Lux didn't stop moving to investigate while asking a question through the Dragon Voice.

It was a large room, so to avoid Listelka from intercepting the communication, Lux used Dragon Voice to ask even though Aeril was right nearby.

Then Aeril quickly replied through Dragon Voice too.

『I was also careless. I didn't meet with Listelka-neesan that often but, come to think of it I once heard about something. She once said that it's possible for her to use the Ruin's function just for a bit in a room of this surface level floor. And that got carried out to the old castle and she said she is trying to make use of it.....』

『What is—』

『It's the manufacturing machine, for Divine Drag-Rides.』

「.....-!？」

Hearing that caused Lux to spontaneously lose his words.

『Originally the same Divine Drag-Ride cannot be created in great number, because it has been determined like that by Avalon. But—it's a different matter if a Divine Drag-Ride got completely destroyed. Although it will take a lot of time and labor, but even lost Divine Drag-Rides can be recreated.』

『And, how is that related with the communication just now?』

『The greatest fighting strength of us Lords is completely resurrected. Mishis almost never moves because she is shouldering the mission of being Listelka-neesama's guard constantly. And then, it's also because she is a trump card. However, right now the requirements where it's fine to use her are in place. The restoration of the Divine Drag-Ride for her is finished.』

「.....」

Lux was tilting his head in puzzlement hearing her voice from the Dragon Voice while continuing to search inside the Abyss plant slightly far away.

Even during that time he was searching for the portal to return to the old castle, but his movement suddenly stopped.

「Come to think of it.....what's going on? Why is it not even a single Abyss attacking us even though we are inside the Abyss plant?」

It was a strange out of place feeling that Lux had kept feeling since they entered this room.

Even if the Abyss created here would head outside, it was strange that there wasn't even one Abyss inside a space this large.

Did Listelka interfere with the system of Avalon and cleared the Abyss beforehand for them, or else.

When Lux was thinking that, a sudden strange smell made him frown.

At a corner deep inside that wasn't clearly visible until now—, a bluish white light was drowned out by a blackish sea of blood there.

「This is—!？」

That sight that Lux noticed after some delay caused him to turn speechless.

They died.

More than ten—no, at the very least, dozens of the Abyss of many varieties were rotting there in pieces.

One Abyss got its head split open, one other had its core pierced, one got bisected.

The spurt of blood splashed the surrounding capsules and blocked the light.

「——」

And then, what surprised Lux the most wasn't that a single girl accomplished that alone, but how he didn't notice that she was there.

She was erasing her presence, slipped into the darkness, and waited for the

time when the enemy approached.

If Lux was actually the girl's target, then his head would have flown already by now.

「Mishis V Xfer.....！」

Lux who noticed her existence reflexively raised his voice.

The silent maid who guarded the Lords with a will of steel.

Her hair was blue like Krulcifer. Right now she was wearing a pilot suit instead of a maid uniform.

Blood of the Abyss was scattered at the surroundings, but not a single speck of blood could be seen on her and the Drag-Ride she was wearing.

「Also, that Drag-Ride—」

The thick armor of ultramarine color she was wearing.

Lux gazed in wonderment at that familiar form.

「Yes, it's the Divine Drag-Ride Azi Dahaka. It was once destroyed by you, but with the liberation of all the Ruins, it could finally be recreated.」

「.....」

Hayes who was acting as an arms dealer lent a Divine Drag-Ride to Balzeride. It seemed that Drag-Ride was originally Mishis's.

Since then, Mishis who was the Lord's trump card had never acted. So the reason was because she was waiting until Azi Dahaka could be recreated at full power.

But, for the girl to take action like this.....

「Both of you, please move away. The enemy is coming.」

Mishis muttered that. The side of her face had several geometrical patterns surfacing with faint radiance.

Full Connect.

The special mode that was only usable for Key's Supervisors like Krulcifer or Soffice, with their Drag-Ride aptitude that was of the highest class. But it should

also put a lot of burden on the body, and yet Mishis used it right from the start.

She slowly took a stance with her Halberd and glared quietly to the plant's entrance.

Right after that, several anchors flew out with twisting path from that darkness.

「Typhon's Pile Anchor—so the vanguard is Philuffy Aingram.」

Mishis wasn't agitated even against a surprise attack from long range.

She dodged the tip of the wire chain that approached like a bullet and then charged forward with her Halberd raised.

「So the wire's aim isn't me, but the structure behind?」

「——」

Mishis spoke dispassionately. Just as she predicted, the Pile Anchor dug into the capsule behind Mishis and then it got pulled back in high speed.

Mishis who was in between had her back exposed to the surprise attack of a capsule that was pulled from behind but—

「One is attacking from the front and back, then that means the other one will attack at a different timing—or will it be from above, right, or left?」

Celis who appeared exactly at that timing above Mishis using Divine Gate frowned in vigilance.

Even though this was the first time Mishis watched the cooperation of Celis and Philuffy, she instantly saw through their tactic.

「How are you going to defend after knowing that?」

But, even so Celis didn't hesitate and lunged to diagonally below with Lightning Lance from the air.

From Mishis's view point, it was a thrust to below from the air in front of her.

Several Pile Anchors were fired from the front to behind her, and from there an object was pulled to attack her back.

So to speak, it was a pincer attack from front and back.

Furthermore several wires were passing right beside Mishis's armor. They became obstacles that prevented her to move to left, right, up, or down.

It was a splendid tactic that synchronized the Divine Raiments of the two.

When the sure kill pincer attack that astonished even Lux was going to land, at that time—

「Unfortunately, you two made a mistake.」

Mishis muttered. The right armored arm that was holding her weapon was swung with all her strength. First her Halberd stabbed the capsule approaching her from behind.

At the same time, Celis's Lance thrust from the front was blocked by Azi Dahaka's full power barrier.

It was just for a moment, but the lance thrust that was unleashed from midair was stopped. In that interval the Halberd that had a capsule skewered on it was swung down vertically from behind.



In other words, the skewered capsule was struck down to the lance at the front and the thrust was repelled.

「—!？」

Within that moment that lasted less than an instant, a precise offense and defense that was like a superhuman feat was exchanged.

「She blocked that cooperation attack in that situation—」

Even Lux thought that it was a coordination attack that seemed impossible to dodge without using Bahamut's Divine Raiment.

Mishis cut her way through with the shortest and best action without even a twitch of her eyebrow.

「That's not it! Those two are in danger.....!」

But, Aeril beside him gritted her teeth with a voice tone that was lowered extremely low.

Lux was perplexed in incomprehension of what she meant, but when his gaze returned to the battle of Celis and Philuffy, that question was immediately cleared.

At the same time Zahhak gripped its Breath Whip and stretched the whip's tip to outside the door.

「Then, it's over with this. Thousand Sorcery Avesta」

「Kuh!？」

Right after Mishis repelled Celis's Lance with her Halberd, Azi Dahaka's armor shined dazzlingly and its Divine Raiment was activated.

Azi Dahaka's Divine Raiment, Avesta, was an atrocious ability that would absorb the energy of other Drag-Rides, furthermore it would also steal their Divine Raiment.

Celis wasn't present in the fight against Balzeride. She had only heard of the story from Lux and the others.

Thus, when an average Drag-Knight would immediately retreat to avoid having their Drag-Ride stolen, Celis instead chose the opposite option.

The moment her Lance was parried by the Halberd from above to below, she quickly rotated her Lance once with that momentum—and took a stance once more. This time she didn't stab her Lance directly, but fired electricity from that tip.

「That's—Lightning Flash!」

The electric attack of Lightning Lance could be fired until medium distance.

Furthermore the electric attack was impossible to block even by a barrier. On top of that, against Mishis who was in Full Connect with her Drag-Ride, the damage would be amplified instead.

While it was just after their sure kill coordination got blocked, Celis immediately executed the best option in a flash. It was possible thanks to Celis's extremely polished tactical thinking—『Maneuver Tactic Book』. (TN: Embarrassingly, I forgot the name that I used for it last time this was mentioned, if anyone can remind me what it was? Tehe)

On the other hand, Philuffy whose attack was avoided was also taking the stance of further attack.

Typhon skated like a bullet. It approached Mishis in a stance where its right arm was pulled back.

Its left hand was focusing energy of Biting Burst with the intention to blow up the enemy right when the hand grasped.

It was a certain death checkmate once more by the two.

Right after the lightning of Lightning Flash reached, Azi Dahaka's armor rocked back.

「.....They did it!」

「No—wrong!」

Lux reflexively raised his voice, but beside him Aeril's lips trembled.

Lux was perplexed in incomprehension. But then, that sight entered his eyes.

「This is—what happened!?」

「The attack, from the front.....?」

The armor part that was directly hit by lightning hit Lindwurm directly like a buckshot. Next Tyhpon's sight was also blinded.

In addition shockwaves of lapis lazuli color also surged from there which hit Celis and Philuffy respectively.

Although it didn't give considerable damage, their movements were definitely halted from attacking further.

In a glance, it was similar to Break Purge where a part of the armor was taken off voluntarily, but something was different.

「It's Azi Dahaka's special armament.....」<sup>Crawling Out Impurity Reflector</sup> When the armor receives an attack, it will automatically fire shockwaves and armor shells in counterattack to the enemy and the surroundings. The movement of the two was sealed by that.....！」

There were two cannons mounted on both its shoulders, the <sup>Jaw of Double-Head</sup> Devil's Glow, and after it there was one more special armament.

It seemed Balzeride didn't use it because he was inexperienced, but due to that special armament, it automatically counterattacked and stopped the attacks of the two.

And then—

「You made the best judgment, splendid. But you two have unknowingly violated the greatest prohibition. It's hopeless for Drag-Knights to fight me.」

「-.....!? This is, this Divine Raiment—」

「Strength, is leaving, ku.....」

Celis and Philuffy weren't even touched by Mishis's Azi Dahaka.

They were wary of having their Divine Raiment getting stolen and took a distance of several ml away.

But regardless of that, their Drag-Ride's energy was stolen with terrifying speed.

Also, before the two could put up countermeasures, Mishis moved.

「——」

Azi Dahaka swung its Halberd with the fastest driving force, striking the head of Celis's Lindwurm.

Celis barely defended using her Lance, but at that moment, the light territory of Divine Gate that was deployed at the surrounding area was erased.

「Great reaction speed. But, it's tragic. In front I who possess the nickname of Anti Drag-Knight—Divine Gate.」

Right after Mishis stole the Divine Raiment from Celis's Lindwurm, she activated it without delay and Azi Dahaka moved instantly.

The appearance location was right behind Philuffy. At that instant when Mishis used her Halberd to mow down, Philuffy's back spinning kick exploded into action.

Philuffy's instinct could even predict the appearance location of Celis's Divine Gate when they fought in the mock battle at the past. Her counterattack hit.

Mishis was blown away until the wall of the plant while she stared at her own hand with a serious face.

「I feel nothing but admiration. A human that isn't even a Lord or a Key's Supervisor is able to heighten their strength until this far—it's unfortunate that I have to kill the two of you even then.」

Even though she received a kicking counterattack, she blocked it firmly with her left hand.

No, it wasn't just a guard.

It wasn't defending, but stealing.

The Divine Raiment of Philuffy's Typhon—

「—Missing Faith」

Lux held his breath with a taken aback look. At that time, a jet black wave was unleashed from Azi Dahaka's armor.

It was a Divine Raiment of neutralization that was mighty without equal, neutralizing the Divine Raiment of everyone other than oneself, while at the same time downing the output of the Drag-Rides in the surroundings.

The first effect didn't work because the Divine Raiment of the two had been stolen, but because they got hit by that while in the middle of energy absorption from Avesta, their movement was almost completely sealed.

No matter how much exceptional combat strength Celis and Philuffy boasted, they were powerless if the Drag-Ride itself didn't work.

Thus, the two were completely shut out by the ability of Drag-Ride killer that the current Mishis possessed.

「Then, adieu.」

She bowed appropriately for a maid, and right after that the armored arm that was holding the Halberd was swung.

The Halberd was accurately striking toward the shoulder where the Force Core that was the moving power of a Drag-Ride was located.

「Ku, aah.....!？」

「Lu.....chan」

With that the Drag-Rides of the two were suspended and their armors were dispelled.

Celis and Philuffy who used up their strength staggered and fell prostrated on the plant's cold floor.

The two powerful fighters who were equal even against the Seven Dragon Paladins were defeated in the blink of an eye.

「This is, the Lords' strongest fighting force.....！」

Lux who witnessed that could only gasp in amazement.

The strength of Mishis who was wearing Azi Dahaka might be equal against Yoruka—no, against Singlen at full power.

(Rather than that, this is bad.....)

Right now while Lux was pretending to be in the position of siding with the Lords, there was no way he could save Celis and Philuffy.

But, if he didn't challenge Mishis here, Celis and Philuffy would be killed.

He had to somehow stop only that from happening no matter what.

Even if his secret agreement with Aeril would come to nothing and he had to die by the electric shock of the Wedge.

Even if, like that, the two of them couldn't be saved in the end—he absolutely couldn't overlook this without doing anything.

The instant Lux resolved himself like that, he strongly grasped Bahamut's Sword Device.

Even if Aeril stopped him once more, he was resolved to shake her off with all his might—but,

「Wait! Mishis!」

Just before Lux moved, Aeril raised her voice.

Mishis stopped her arm in response to her master's voice, and turned her emotionless face towards her.

「What could it be, your highness Aeril? They are the last threat standing in my lord's way. We also have enough hostages. I judge that we should deal with them here—」

『Yes—that's right. I only recognized Lux to be your servant. No matter how tolerant you are towards other people, I won't allow you to act too far.』

When Mishis looked up to the plant's ceiling, Listelka's voice immediately descended.

As expected, she was linked with Avalon's system and monitored this place even now.

Most likely Listelka considered this reaction of Aeril when she sent Mishis here.

She wasn't thinking so far that Aeril would abandon her own mission and join hands with Lux and the others, but, at the very least, she suspected that Aeril might be merciful to Lux's comrades.

Listelka was manufacturing this situation to measure Aeril's true intention, how she would act as a Lord right now.

But, Aeril silently shook her head and rejected Listelka's words.

「Of course I understand that. What I'm going to say is another matter. If it's Listelka-neesama, then surely you have noticed it already.」

『.....? This reaction, don't tell me—』

The moment Listelka murmured so, the whole room of the Abyss plant shook intensely.

Lux was taken aback and held his breath. At that moment, the center of the floor broke apart and flame overflowed out.

Several fire arrows that flew from there grazed Aeril's side and blood spurted out.

「.....- ku!？」

「Aeril!？」

Lux immediately called out to her while glaring at the appearing enemy.

A petite girl wearing a tidy dress—no, it was a pitch black presence that contained bottomless evil omen.

As long as Avalon wasn't stopped, the last Ragnarok, Sacred Eclipse would resurrect no matter how many times. Now it appeared in this place.

Regarding this, even the Lords were unable to control it at the current stage.

This was one of the reasons why Listelka was mostly staying in the airborne ship—Heaven Palace without descending to the old castle.

(But, this situation is excessively bad!)

It was nice that Mishis's attention was diverted, but Sacred Eclipse would attack them without discrimination, but he also couldn't leave from this place while leaving behind the collapsed Celis and Philuffy.

「Mishis! Buy us time while we escape! We will search for the portal to return to the old castle right now!」

「.....—Understood.」

When Aeril said that, Mishis readied her Halberd and confronted Sacred

Eclipse.

On the other hand Lux was going to move to rescue Celis and Philuffy, but Aeril stopped him from the side.

「Lux-kun, don't do anything!」

He thought that she was telling him to abandon them, but right after that, the sound of slicing wind came from the plant's door.

Two Drag-Knights appeared from there, Lizsharte and Krulcifer.

「Lisha-sama!? Krulcifer-san!?」

The moment he saw the two of them wearing Tiamat and Fafnir respectively, Lux raised his voice spontaneously.

「What kind of situation is this!?」

Lisha who entered the room frowned when she saw the inside of the plant that was turned into chaos.

On the other hand, Krulcifer calmly looked at the situation.

The choker of Wedge on Lux's neck. How he was standing beside Aeril. The trace of battle by Celis and Philuffy.

And then, the figure of Mishis who was wearing Azi Dahaka, the Divine Drag-Ride that she once fought by fate.

In addition, the figure of Sacred Eclipse that Mishis was confronting—

「It seems, it's a situation that is not so simple. But, I can imagine it more or less.」

「It doesn't matter! We've got to collect those two quickly and take Lux back—」

「Please listen to me calmly. Most likely we are unable to rescue Lux-kun right now. The best action for us to take is to take Celis-senpai and Philuffy and retreat from here. Get out from this surface level floor and escape from the old castle.」

「Don't be stupid! If we let go of this chance, Lux will.....—!?」

Lisha was about to talk emotionally, but she faltered seeing Krulcifer's serious gaze.

For her, she also wanted to save Lux more than anyone just like Lisha.

But, the girl who was always calm and collected had cold sweat flowing from her forehead while biting her lips. Lisha guessed the severity of the situation from seeing Krulcifer's tense state.

That this situation was containing danger that surpassed their imagination.

Not to mention making a miss, even just making a slightly worse choice would checkmate them into the 『worst case』.

「.....Got it. Looks like I let the blood rush to my head slightly. Lux will need to wait for a bit more.」

「Yes, it will only be for a bit. We will take him without fail.」

After responding shortly like that, the two exploded into action.

Krulcifer picked up Celis, while Lisha carried Philuffy. Without pause the two of them escaped at full speed.

「Don't pay attention to them! We have to achieve our own objective!」

Lux nodded shortly and followed Aeril's instruction.

(Lisha-sama, Krulcifer-san..... Philuffy, Celis-senpai—)

The girls came here by risking their lives to save him. But right now he parted from them with a flood of emotions within him.

The Sacred Eclipse that was letting out a shuddering scream, and Mishis's Azi Dahaka that was facing it.

With the reverberation of their intense battle sound behind, Lux and Aeril headed even deeper into the surface floor level.

The presences of his dear classmates held him back, even so, he acted to fight against reality.

# Episode 4 – A Plan That Leads to Demise

## Part 1

- Gogon.....gogon.....\*. Such strange vibration sound was resounding intermittently.

In the sky far above the old castle.

In the control room of the airborne ship that was called Heaven Palace, the Lord's first imperial princess, Listelka was sitting on the chair with her eyes closed.

The crown on her head was connected with countless cords, forming a system for linking her consciousness with Avalon.

「.....Fuu. So those girls cannot be finished off.」

Listelka sighed before getting down from her personal chair.

A blatant disappointment was unusually surfacing on her expression.

Through Baptism, she obtained the ability to be connected with the mechanism of Avalon, but the time of her being able to connect and interfere with the system wasn't long.

The burden was far larger compared to wearing a Drag-Knight.

Thus, attacking hostiles or observing Aeril weren't something that she could do anytime easily.

That was just how painful the failure of dealing with Lisha and the others even after she had played her greatest card—Mishis.

「They have strong luck to escape trouble.」

「Yes, though it's just as expected from people who had accomplished the capture of the Ruins until now.」

Listelka nodded briefly to Fugil who was standing by beside her.

「Let's have Mishis come back for the time being after the Sacred Eclipse is defeated. I have faith in Fugil's skill, but the great task will continue after a short rest, so I wish to increase the guard as much as possible.」

「As you wish, my lord.」

「Geez, you are stiff like usual. Even though I'm always telling you it's fine to call my name without honorific.」

Listelka sulked along with a jesting gesture.

If there was a third person watching from the side, they would clearly see that there was an emotion there that surpassed a mere relationship of a master and a servant.

Listelka was still not convinced whether Aeril would betray her or not.

But—at the same time, Aeril also didn't know about her elder sister's terrifying scheme.

The true reason why Lux and Aeril were ordered to capture Avalon.

That they were imposed with the role to open the door of hell.

「Also, there is a messenger from the remnants of Dragon Marauder. It looks like there is movement from the leaders of the countries. They will soon arrive here.」

「That is the best news. It looks like the second group of Shadows were effective.」

The war declaration that Listelka sent to all the countries.

The enemy side thought that it was a diversion to avert their focus from capturing Avalon and ignored it, but it actually caused them to be unable to see through the second plan that Listelka executed.

At first, the Shadows only mimicked Listelka's appearance and only endlessly

preached about the failure of the current rulers, but after that, they transformed into drama type.

In the New kingdom, the realization of the plan was in the shape of some Shadows turning into commoners who criticized Queen Raffi who wasn't going to the abandoned capital, and then some other Shadows transformed into soldiers who killed those Shadow commoners under the pretext of subjugation.

Because that drama was performed without questioning day or night, the people of each country misunderstood and agitation and terror ran among them.

From the beginning, Listelka's scheme had two stages.

Thus, the world alliance finally couldn't stay quiet and they were forced to go for negotiation.

In order to invest all their forces leaving behind only their guard, to quickly kill the Lords.

But—the leaders of each country starting from Queen Raffi didn't know.

That such thing was exactly the worst trap that Listelka prepared.

She was already laying her hand on the forbidden box sleeping at the deepest part of Avalon's surface level floor.

The preparation in order to rule the world was steadily put in order.

## Part 2

On the other hand, around that time—in the chapel inside the old castle.

The members of the Seven Dragon Paladins other than Lux who also got Wedges placed on their necks, the six of them were confined together there.

Thanks to Aeril's management, their environment was improved somewhat, but it was still hard to say that the environment was really good.

Although they were all in one room, they were all fellow foreigners, so normally they weren't really that involved with each other, but because they had too much free time, they amused themselves by chatting.

「But, the more I think about it, the more I don't get it. Is there still any reason for them to keep us alive? Isn't it better to kill us quickly without using us as hostages or whatever?」

「You are sharp as usual despite being only a little brat, yeah. But normally, would a prisoner talk about something like that, huh?」

Greifer spat out with exasperation in response to Mel who was murmuring calmly.

「Don't treat me like a kid just because you are a bit older than me. I was formally appointed to the seat of Ymir Theocracy's representative. You yourself, even though normally you always act slovenly without any motivation.」

「Quarreling isn't good. The enemy will take advantage of it if we do something like that.」

「I don't wanna hear that from you!」

「I don't want to hear that from you-!」

Soffice spoke to the two of them with a blank face, but in response Greifer and Mel retorted simultaneously.

And then, further beside them, the red haired Rosa leaked out an exasperated sigh.

「So you guys felt composed enough to amuse yourself with nonsense talk noow? But certainly it's strange isn't iit. Even if we more or less have value as hostages, it's too dangerous to leave us alive like this.」

Rosa muttered with a fearless gaze. In response Magialca who was sitting at the back of the room grinned widely.

「It can't be helped. Perhaps I'll teach you all as the captain.」

She stretched her small and lean body with a jerk, and then she performed light calisthenics with her arms and feet still shackled while speaking.

「The first reason is to use us as a trump card towards the remaining world alliance's forces. The people taking command of the expeditionary force in the abandoned capital Guernica are most likely my aide Lolotte, and then Singlen's aide Zweigbergk. Well, they aren't that serious of a threat so the Lords doesn't use us actively to threaten them, but when the critical moment comes, we can be used as hostages against those two. In that sense there is some value of letting us live.」

「That talk makes it sound like all of us here got no worth at all eh.」

「It's a sad thing but, it's exactly as you said.」

Greifer let out a voice that exchanged a joke, to which Magialca responded with a jest.

「Even though you all are Drag-Knights who are called as the trump cards of your respective country, as expected, they won't exchange the head of their kings for you, correct?」

「What a harsh story of the world. Though I think it's only natural.」

Mel let out a sigh of exasperation. Beside her, Rosa sent a glance at Magialca.

「And, what is the real truth theen? It will be easier if you just say it straight without prolonging it though?」

「You there, you are really impudent in that mode huh. Well, fine, it's a simple story. Those guys are lacking combat force. If possible they want us to serve

under them.]

「——」

Everyone who heard Magialca's words showed bewilderment.

「You mean they are trying to spend time persuading us? After destroying our country that is.】

「I cannot say that the possibility is zero. But, my prediction is different.】

Magialca bared an obscene grin as though she was scheming something bad and then she talked about it.

「This is only my speculation but, most likely in the deepest part of Avalon—if they reached until the central, won't it even become possible to completely brainwash us?】

「.....-!？」

Everyone once more held their breath and their complexion changed.

It was only Singlen who didn't say even a single word and merely smiled.

「Wait a second! Brainwash you say, no way it can be that easily—】

「It won't be that simple you say? Can we say that after our perception got completely changed by the ability of that second imperial princess called Aeril, when in the end we got tricked and imprisoned like this?】

「.....」

Magialca cut off Mel's objection and spoke cynically.

Beside her Soffice nodded with brazenness.

「That possibility might be high. The Lords surely have no intention to trust us.】

「But, if that's the case that means we also have an option don't you think?】

Magialca added with a tone that was containing implication. Rosa tilted her head with a doubtful face hearing that.

「What do you meaan?】

「You want to say that it will be fine if we all suicide together right? This damn

fiend.]

「—Wha-!?’]

Singlen who was staying quiet until now suddenly spoke. The words that he spat out caused everyone other than Magialca to have a forbidding look.

「Is that really surprising? It’s the obvious thing. Even if we stay here, sooner or later we will be used or remade into a tool. Then severing our own lives and erasing our value as hostages is the logical judgment.]

The Wedge would discharge electricity if they tried to remove it, but if they did it by themselves three times, the power would be automatically increased until lethal level, so it would be easy to suicide.

「Hohou. Then you can do it first. Now do it! Show them the example as the vice captain!]」

Magialca supported that suggestion with her all, but Singlen scoffed.

「Unfortunately, there is no way I will follow your wish. Either way if it becomes like that then it’s the same like getting murdered. If it will result in death either way, then it is human to bet in the possibility of hope, isn’t that right?]」

「When it’s you who talks about hope, it sounds really fishy yeah.....]」

Greifer turned a fixed stare at Singlen’s calm proposition.

「In other words, it all depends on Onii-chan, doesn’t it? Whether we can break through this situation or not will be—]」

Mel reached the answer after listening to that exchange.

In the end, they could only bet on Lux who was chosen by Aeril and who was the only one among them to obtain half a freedom.

Right now they could only sit quietly here believing in that.

「In the end there ain’t anyone who decided to suicide, huh.]」

Greifer who saw everyone’s state muttered that with a wry smile.

In other words everyone here was hanging their hopes on Lux.

That he would overturn this situation and save the world as the central figure of the Seven Dragon Paladins.

## Part 3

「Haa, haa.....-！」

On the other hand, around that time—underground the old castle in the abandoned capital Guernica.

A few minutes after Celis and Philuffy were defeated by Mishis, Sacred Eclipse appeared, and then parting with Lisha and Krulcifer who came in pursuit.

Lux and Aeril who left behind the Abyss plant on the surface level floor continued their search in order to discover the portal to return to the old castle.

But, there was also no way they could take a breather in the passage where the Abyss were prowling in swarms. Since then they fought countless Abyss while wandering in the underground that was like a maze.

The more Lux looked at the interior of Avalon, the more he thought that it was a mysterious structure.

At a glance, it had an atmosphere that was like an ancient underground passage, but on the other side of that crumbling wall he could see a silver colored wall surface that was glowing faintly.

Furthermore, inside several small rooms and spaces that they found midway, they saw spaces that were modeled after a great variety of shapes he had seen existing inside other Ruins until now.

Forest, river, or even a desert.

If not for his current position and situation, he would stop unconsciously and stare at the sight.

「Aeril, are you okay? That wound, we have to treat it first somewhere—」

「.....No, just this much is okay. More importantly, we finally got away from the monitoring. Let's advance as much as we can for now.」

Aeril acted strong even though her breathing was rough. She hurried ahead wearing Zahhak.

But, midway she finally fell on her knee and her armor was dispelled.

「-.....!？」

「Don't force yourself! Let's rest for a bit, if there is a room nearby somewhere—」

「Sor, ry.....」

After Aeril said that with a gasping breath, Lux held her and he started searching for a small room.

But, Aeril shook her head and stopped him.

「Because, I don't want to get found out..... Perhaps right now, the possibility is high that we aren't being eavesdropped anymore—if my conversation with you, is known by Nee-san it will be bad.」

「I get it. Wait just for a bit more!」

Lux laid down Aeril's body on the passage's floor, then he scooped up water from the nearby room—a place with a terrain that was modeled like a valley.

「Nn, uu.....」

When Lux hurriedly returned to the corridor, Aeril's eyes were closed while she was letting out feverish breath.

Did she faint because her string of tension snapped from the extreme fatigue?

Lux reached out his hand to her pilot suit to treat her side that was cut.

He was reluctant to strip the clothes of a sleeping girl, but with the situation as it was he had no other choice.

「Sorry, Aeril.」

He only stripped off the upper part of the pilot suit that was the only thing covering her, then he laid her down face up on a towel that he spread on the floor.

The radiant naked body even in the darkness caused Lux's eyes to be glued to

it.

He saw her back completely when he was staying in the same room with her in the Vanheim Principality, but this time he felt like her sensuality was increasing even more than that time.

Perhaps it was because the girl's magic that was faking her own existence had been dispelled.

Or perhaps it was because Lux was starting to get conscious of Aeril's own existence itself?

「Nn, Lux.....kun」

Aeril, whose eyes were still closed, was moving her right hand around with pained gasp.

「It's all right, Aeril.」

Lux naturally took that hand and calmed her breathing. She then continued to sleep.

## Part 4

It wasn't a dream, but a recollection.

She was recalling in reality, the past of more than several hundred years ago where even the memory itself was fading faintly.

The second imperial princess, Aeril Vi Arcadia was there from the start as an imperial princess.

Her first memory was only that.

The Holy Arcadia Empire that was established as this world's legitimate ruler.

She received kind treatment as an existence who was above the clouds—no, in the territory of god.

She was treated like that as though it was only obvious by her parents who were the country's sovereigns, her relatives, and then also by her educators and servants.

She started harboring doubt when she was around seven years old.

It was when she was reading a book and got interested in the word 『friend』.

Aeril who was a tomboy in the past secretly sneaked out of the castle and went out. There she encountered a young boy around the castle.

A young boy with similar silver hair and grey eyes like her.

She said that her parents were working near the castle, so she came here to see.

「What, so you are a girl. I thought you were a man?」

「Geez, that's rude.」

Aeril who had an androgynous atmosphere since that time hid her standing and talked with that boy several times.

Each time they deepened their relationship, played, and spent time together.

But, the boy wasn't royalty nor a noble, but a person of lower class.

The Lords—the Arcadia clan joined hands with the Key's Supervisor and conquered the world with a certain technology, ruling over the world.

But, even then a disparity was created within their own clan and it was spreading.

A certain researcher created a secret medicine called Elixir.

In addition was the Baptism to apply Elixir to the flesh body and strengthen it.

That power was too amazing, but at the same time it split the current human race into two.

The production amount of Elixir was few, but it was possible to obtain powerful strength if the body could adapt to it through Baptism.

An even more outstanding existence could be created artificially.

They could monopolize since birth not just fortune, but even talent.

The blood relatives who received that blessing were humans of the upper class—all other than them were humans of lower class. Like that the Lords were split into two.

Many months and years passed, the upper class that was becoming arrogant changed the structure to gather even more Elixir for themselves.

That was exactly the cause of the collapse.

It was the moment when the existence of the family of traitors appeared inside the Holy Arcadia Empire that ruled the world.

And then—Aeril's fate was also moving from there.

The revolution occurred eight years after that.

## Part 5

「Tsuu-.....！」

Aeril felt pain and opened her eyes.

When she looked, she was laying down on a simple bed that seemed to be carried out from a safe zone without her knowing.

Lux was sitting on a chair beside her.

A bandage was wrapped on the wound on her side and she was laid on the bed upside down.

「Ah, you woke up. It looks like your bleeding stopped, but it will be better to not move for a while you know? There is also the burn injury—」

「Yes.....」

Aeril powerlessly nodded hearing Lux telling her that.

「It seemed you had a nightmare but, did your wound feel painful?」

「My old wound, just for a bit. It was eight years ago already—no, it was a matter of several hundred years ago though.....」

But, there was no other old wound on Aeril's body that was standing out.

Lux wondered if perhaps she was referring to an old wound in her heart rather than her body.

「Did, something happen?」

「.....」

Aeril hesitated towards Lux's question, and before long she formed her words with a small voice.

「Hey, why did Lux-kun treat my wound?」

「Eh.....?」

Lux asked back in bewilderment at that sudden question.

「Your Wedge won't shock you just because you didn't help me. It should be fine even if you just left me alone. No, I even exposed your comrades to danger, so why—」

Aeril asked like that with an expression that looked gloomy.

「Is it because you will be troubled that you won't be able to move if I die? Or perhaps—」

「Err, I don't really understand myself.」

Lux who heard her words showed a troubled smile and stared at Aeril.

In response, Aeril's eyes turned round in puzzlement.

「But perhaps, it was because I thought that maybe Aeril helped us. Before this you predicted that Sacred Eclipse's position was near us. That was why, perhaps you spread Zahhak's whip around and searched for the Sacred Eclipse, and then lured it there, in order to change that situation.」

If he thought like that, then the reason why Aeril got hit by Sacred Eclipse's attack at the beginning would also be explained.

Furthermore, thanks to that, it also became natural to ask for help from Mishis.

「.....」

Aeril fell silent at what Lux pointed out.

In other words, what he said was correct.

She was trying to save Celis and Philuffy even though they were enemies.

She paid meticulous attention so that Listelka and Mishis wouldn't suspect her and helped them out even though she had to brave danger.

「That's, just Lux-kun's wild idea right? You didn't actually see me doing such thing, and there is no proof at all. Am I wrong?」

「I guess.」

Aeril's words sounded sulking, but Lux replied while playing the fool.

「But, that's fine. Because—I believe like that.」

「Why.....」

Seeing such Lux, Aeril suddenly raised a depressed voice.

「Why is Lux-kun like that? Do you believe in people that much?」

「Aeril?」

「I, I cannot do that. Whether it's believing in someone, or throwing away my own position. Isn't someone from the imperial family, something like that?」

「.....」

Lux hesitated to say something toward Aeril's words that were filled with indecision.

「How was, Lux-kun able to destroy the Old Empire? Even if the revolution succeeded, there is no way everyone will praise Lux-kun. No, far from that, you might even have been resented unjustly and killed by the people, and yet—」

「That's because, I met a person who saved someone like me.」

Lux quickly answered Aeril's question like that.

When he was a child, Lux's grandfather admonished the emperor. Lux and his family received unjustified resentment due to that and they were banished from the imperial court.

When his mother who became seriously injured due to a coach accident was abandoned by the common people, Lux cursed the whole world. At that time, Philuffy came to meet him.

Lux who got back on his feet because someone was there to be his ally aimed to create a country where Airi and Philuffy and others could live peacefully. He tried to change the country with every means available.

「That was why I was thinking about what I could do as an imperial family member. When I was a child, I was a puppet who only obeyed what my father.....the emperor said. But, I became unable to endure that. Nothing will change if I don't start taking action from myself, I won't be able to obtain what I want. Because I thought that—」

「I see. As I thought, Lux-kun is strong.」

Aeril who listened to Lux's words sent him a bright smile.

「That's not true. It's thanks to everyone.」

「No. That's it.」

「Eh.....?」

「You being able to become friends with various people like that, is something amazing.」

After Aeril told him that, Lux pondered for a moment before returning a smile.

「Then that's great. I can also become friends with Aeril.」

「.....」

Aeril was spontaneously dumbfounded by the words that came from Lux's mouth.

She reflexively covered her face with her hands to hide her blushing cheeks and averted her face away.

「Geez, really, just what are you thinking, making that kind of surprise attack.....」

「.....? What's wrong, Aeril?」

「No, nothing! More importantly, let's go soon. We still haven't accomplished our objective.」

「Yes. Ah, but, that's. Before that, if you don't wear your pilot suit properly—」

「U, WAAAAAH!? Don't look over here-! Lux-kun you pervert!」

Because she lifted up her body quickly, Aeril's upper body became exposed and Lux reflexively averted his gaze.

Strictly speaking he already got a clear view, but he didn't say it.

## Part 6

「—Say? I want to ask instead though, why is Aeril trying to save us?」

A few minutes after they resumed their search, Lux was driving his Wyvern and Aeril was driving her EX Wyvern while investigating the underground maze of the surface level floor.

When Lux asked in the middle of that, Aeril hesitated to say.

「What? Are you trying to varnish over the matter just now, when you were staring hard at me naked?」

「I'm telling you, I wasn't staring hard or anything like that-! I only took off the suit to treat your wound!」

Aeril retorted with a reproachful glare while looking slightly embarrassed. Lux panicked hearing that.

She dodged his question so he thought that she didn't want to say the reason at all, but after a while Aeril answered.

「It might be just for deceiving you, so it will be useless even if you ask me that.」

「Even so that's fine for me.」

「Haa.....」

Aeril yielded against Lux's obstinacy and she formed her words.

「It's the same like you. It's because I noticed my own sin. Our sin that we had averted our eyes from all this time—in the first place, all of you family of traitors revolting against us is also sort of justified.」

「.....」

「Even so, once I thought that it couldn't be helped. Humans live by sacrificing something, although there is large and small differences between each person.」

But—tricking and stealing even from your own comrades who are your fellow humans is simply evil, and thinking that such thing is only natural is hubris.]

Aeril made a mournful expression and smiled quietly when saying that.

「I cannot speak about that sin, Lux-kun. If you know about it, you will surely scorn me. The truth of the past that I learned, and this fate—」

Lux spontaneously lost his words when looking from the side at her face that was hiding resolve behind it, it was at that timing,

「—Perhaps it's here? This place is most likely the spot that I was told by Nee-san.」

There was a huge door in front of the two of them.

This was the deepest part of Avalon's surface level floor, the control room for opening the door towards the deep level floor.

If the blood of the Lords—right now it was the blood of Aeril—was offered here, the path to the next area could be opened.

「But, what is this? This terrifying air that is causing my hair to stand on end—」

「.....」

Lux nodded in agreement at the words of Aeril who entered inside the control room.

The space that was covered with metallic wall was really similar to the Abyss plant from just now.

However, there was almost no capsules here, but even so, the space was too huge.

And then, above all else, a disquieting presence was drifting in the air.

Even though there was nothing that could be seen at the front, their bodies rang the alarm, warning them without stopping.

Even so, Aeril slowly advanced in order to accomplish her objective.

First, in a different room that could be reached through a long and narrow passage from the large control room—there was a portal there. She activated it

because it would provide a direct route to the old castle.

With this, it became possible to return to the old castle.

After securing the escape route, Aeril walked towards the installation at the center of the control room once more and then she lifted up her hand while still wearing her Drag-Ride.

Then, a mechanical tone that Lux had heard several times before in the Ruins was emitted.

『Lord's authentication, confirmed. By offering a certain amount of that blood, this system will be reactivated. During a total of a few minutes of authentication and reboot, the Lord's mind control operation is required.』

『Excellent. It looks like it will take a bit of time for the processing, but, with this, the path to the deep level floor will be opened. After that—.....』

At that time Aeril suddenly stopped talking because something interrupted her.

Instantly Lux thought that she hurriedly closed her mouth because Listelka's monitoring was in effect.

But, that wasn't it.

The differently colored beautiful eyes of the second imperial princess Aeril was capturing a different sight.

『You damned Lord's second imperial princess! Get away from Lux-!』

『Lisha-sama-!?』

A chance encounter with Lisha wearing Tiamat was a natural happening in a sense.

They were separated from each other since the encounter with Sacred Eclipse, but both sides were mutually searching this area.

Although it was a vast and complicated underground passage that was like a maze, it was highly possible that they would encounter each other.

『There was an unfamiliar light so I suspected it was a trap, but it looks like even the princess's instinct will be on the spot sometimes.』

「What do you mean sometimes!? You make it sound like I'm always thinking carelessly! Putting that aside, I'm taking revenge for the two here!」

Saying that, he sent a glance at Celis and Philuffy who were standing in the back.

It seemed they couldn't wear their Drag-Rides, but they were all right to the degree they could stand and walk.

But, Lux's relieve at the safety of the two only lasted a moment. He noticed something bad.

It would be troubling if right now Aeril was hindered when her plan was about to progress smoothly.

In the worst case, he would be forced to fight against Lisha and the others by Listelka's command again.

(Then rather, I can only persuade them and buy time!)

When Lux resolved himself so and strongly gripped his Wyvern's Blade, Krulcifer quickly walked to the front.

「I'll do it, no matter what kind of circumstance you are in right now.」

Krulcifer who wasn't wearing her armor brushed up her blue long hair and pulled out the Sword Device of Fafnir.

Her usual cool smile wasn't there. She was capturing Lux with a gaze that was concealing a resolve within.

「This is bad. Lux-kun! I want you to buy me time until the unlocking is over.」

Aeril muttered while a tube and a needle had already stretched out from the device that stabbed her arm and she began to offer her blood.

After coming this far, there was no way he could let anyone hinder Aeril's determination anymore.

「Sorry. Lisha-sama, Krulcifer-san. I'm begging you, please withdraw.」

In order to display his own resolve, Lux also dispelled the armor of Wyvern he was wearing and lifted up his other Sword Device to the sky.

「—Reincarnate. The giant dragon of calamity taken captive by riches. Become

the compensation for desire far and wide, Fafnir.]

「—Manifest, the violent dragon devouring the flesh and blood of the gods. Sever the sky of dark clouds, Bahamut.]

Light particles whirled before the two of them and two Drag-Rides were summoned.

They connected at the same time and wore their armor. They silently confronted each other with their weapons at the ready.

「Oi Krulcifer. Why are you trying to go at it alone!? Are you trying to steal my showtime?」

「That's right. There is a pact so no one can steal a march, but it's possible to make an appeal through battle. I'll take him back here while at the same time shooting his heart to become mine too.」

「Wha-! Don't screw around! I'll also—.....-」

Lisha flared at Krulcifer who was muttering mischievously.

But, Lisha noticed the genuine seriousness on her expression and stopped her reaching out hand.

「Most likely Aeril also has a circumstance that she cannot talk about. But, we too cannot possibly let go of this rare golden opportunity to rescue him. If Lux-kun who is collared cannot be rescued without defeating him, then I can only do that. Seeing as I am the only one who can move properly—」

「.....」

Getting told that, Lux noticed that the Tiamat Lisha was wearing was showing the symptom of rampage.

The battle of the other day. She acted recklessly in the intense battle against Dragon Marauder, and after that she went on a harsh march to rush here. Because of that Lisha's stamina was near the limit.

Celis and Philuffy were also the same after the previous battle where their energy was stolen by Mishis.

It was only Krulcifer who could battle Lux in this situation.

Thus, she decided to make a desperate effort here.

「——」

Lux didn't reply and stared at the faces of Lisha and the others with a slightly distressed expression.

He didn't want to clash with his fellow comrades—the people whom he put his trust in, in this kind of shape.

But, most likely there was no way for him to comply with his dealing with Aeril while also persuading the girls.

There was also the possibility that this control room was monitored by Listelka, so he also couldn't talk about the circumstances.

Even if he sent a transmission through Dragon Voice, it might get exposed from the surprised reactions of Lisha and the others.



「You don't need to make that kind of sorrowful face. I swear I'll save you without fail.」

Krulcifer smiled fearlessly as though what they were going to do was another sham battle in the Academy.

「-.....!？」

Aeril who was still wearing her Drag-Ride could be heard gulping from far behind.

To clear the identity confirmation and open the gate to the deep level floor, Aeril wouldn't be able to move for a few minutes while her blood was being taken.

They couldn't escape anymore.

Thus—he could only fight.

「Here I go, Lux-kun.」

「That's fine, Krulcifer-san.」

In order to receive her feeling, Lux also responded with a serious gaze.

She readied her sniper rifle, Freezing Cannon and wind was released from Fafnir's back wings.

In response, Lux also lifted his great sword and put his strength into it in concert.

—\*Kiin!\*

A streak of blue flash ran through empty air, aiming straight towards Lux.

「.....-!？」

Krulcifer's first attack was nothing more than a shot of freezing bullet from the Freezing Cannon.

But, he couldn't see her preliminary motion at all. Lux became slightly flustered.

Her target was Bahamut's right armored arm, the joint between the shoulder and arm.

Normally, shooting was executed through three actions, taking stance, aiming, and pulling the trigger, but her motion was too fast.

(No, wrong. She has become even faster than before!)

Lux barely blocked the shot with his great sword as a shield. But, the flat of the blade was frozen and it became a state where he couldn't move the sword properly.

If it was simply fast then he would be able to respond in any way.

But, there was almost no preliminary motion even from the Drag-Ride in the attack just now.

The way she moved in the shortest and smallest motion so that the opponent wouldn't be able to predict when the attack would come was undoubtedly something that she had practiced tens of thousands of times.

「I can do this much even without using Full Connect. Have you gotten a slightly better opinion of me now?」

「I have never done something like underestimating Krulcifer-san, not even once.」

Lux made a troubled looking smile while gliding fast towards Krulcifer.

He accelerated with explosive speed and swung his sword towards her shoulder.

He made a flash using one of his hidden techniques, Quick Draw. He aimed to hit Fafnir's Force Core through the shoulder's armor and made her unable to fight with one hit.

「That's a lie there. If you know my feelings, then you shouldn't be surprised with just this much.」

Krulcifer chuckled with a teasing smile, however she moved her Fafnir without hesitation.

She made use of Fanir's greatest trait that was its mobility and dodged Lux's sword, then she aimed at Aeril who was standing in front of the installation.

「—！」

Lux quickly readied himself to attack because he couldn't allow that at all cost.

But, Krulcifer twirled around and readied her rifle without dodging his attack.  
(—Damn it!)

Lux noticed late that she was baiting him.

The Auto Shield automatically blocked Lux's great sword, and in that opening Krulcifer turned her gun muzzle towards him.

This time she fired a precision shooting using normal bullet, but at the same time a barrier that appeared in front of Lux's eyes deflected it.

The technique to operate the defensive barrier that he learned by imitating Singlen—Senjin – Ruten.

Lux didn't overlook the opening when Krulcifer's eyes opened wide in surprise and he turned his body to launch a flash of horizontal slash.

But, it seemed she had anticipated that too, because the moment her bullet was deflected, she flew forward and barely dodged the pursuing attack.

—

Lisha who was watching that from the rear felt something out of place and she murmured unconsciously.

「Are the two of them, serious.....? But, why is she not using Fafnir's Divine Raiment? If she is worried about Lux's, then that's all the more reason.....」

If Krulcifer used Wise Blood's future prediction, she should be able to build quite the advantage, and yet.

「I feel like, I understand somehow, her feeling.」

Celis who was even further behind muttered that, then Philuffy also responded with a wordless nod.

「Perhaps.....surely, yes.」

「.....?」

The moment Lisha tilted her head, the battle situation moved once more.

Offense and defense in godspeed where there wasn't even any time to breathe was resumed.

---

Krulcifer was flying in circle around Aeril in high speed while aiming at Lux with normal bullets.

She was taking an orbit that was drawing a circle with Lux at the center, making him unable to get a bead on her while on the contrary she was sniping at him one-sidedly.

Lux was desperately deflecting the precise sniping, even so he wasn't leaving from Aeril's side.

He was pouring all his strength simply for the objective of protecting her.

「Kuh.....！」

Normally even sniping while moving was something with high degree of difficulty, and yet Krulcifer was aiming accurately while moving in high speed that the eye couldn't follow.

If he tried to deflect the bullet by strengthening his barrier, she would shot at the same place consecutively and pierced through.

If he deflected using his great sword, she would aim at his armored wrist to remove the obstacle that became a shield.

(Strong.....! But, why is it? Even though it's an offense that is this sharp, it's not scary.)

This was an outstanding tactic and technique even compared to everything Lux had experienced against until now.

But regardless of that, Lux himself didn't feel any fear.

Lux swung his great sword without understanding just what the reason could be.

He swung a full power slash toward Fafnir's armored shoulder, at the same time he finally activated his Divine Raiment.

「—Reload on Fire.」

The Divine Raiment of Bahamut that performed compression and strengthening was deployed to the front in wide range.

The very space where Krulcifer was existing was compressed and strengthened, and the speed of time there was sharply decreased.

The flow of time was slowed until it was like the enemy was completely standing still, then during that time sword slashes would be dealt, and at the same time when the compression was dissolved, all the attacks would take effect with several times the speed. That was Lux's Violent Strike.

This was the conquering method to breakthrough Fafnir's seven automatic shields.

But, this time he naturally didn't aim at Krulcifer.

Lux fixed his sight to the wrists and shoulders of Fafnir's armored arms. When he took a stance, *pishi*- a strange sound could be heard.

「Above! Lux-kun! Something is falling!」

Lux was taken aback from Aeril's voice and he noticed the rubble falling from above him.

That was the spot where Krulcifer sniped with her normal bullet before this.

「Don't tell me, this was done by using future prediction!?」

「Yes, I couldn't let you be the only one to use your Divine Raiment you know?」

When Lux dodged the falling rubble, the compression strengthening was dispelled and Krulcifer moved.

She put her gun's muzzle on Bahamut's shoulder and quickly pulled the trigger of the Freezing Cannon.

「——」

Lux reflexively held his breath seeing her obtaining a timing that was impossible to avoid.

It was zero-distance shooting where the muzzle was glued on his shoulder armor.

At that time when Krulcifer was convinced of her victory, her bullet was slightly averted.

「.....Wha-!？」

Krulcifer noticed the abnormality an instant later and her eyes opened wide.

Lux didn't let go of that chance and unleashed a slash, but Auto Shield blocked him.

When he struck his sword even then, he was sent flying by the recoil and Lux escaped the danger.

「That's really something. Just what kind of mind you have there? When I was hindered by the dropping rubble, the next moment you moved that rubble to collide with me—」

「Krulcifer-san yourself is amazing. I thought that was it for me.」

The two who took a distance praised each other's amazing technique smilingly.

Right after Lux deflected the rubble, Lux activated Bahamut's built-in special armament, Linker Burst and sent it flying towards Fafnir's armor.

Thus Krulcifer's hand was thrown out of kilter by the impact and the sure kill attack missed.

「Besides, Krulcifer-san intentionally didn't use Wise Blood in the beginning in order to avoid pointless exhaustion, and to use it only when there is a definite chance—」

Future prediction was a useful Divine Raiment in offense and defense, but the future that could be read was limited to a certain degree. Thus it was the ironclad rule to activate it just a bit before a pinch or a chance to make an advantage.

If the user also grew stronger in normal offense and defense and in tactic, then the Wise Blood would also be even more effective when used.

Krulcifer putting that into practice proved that she had accomplished it.

「Hah, even though I thought that I finally caught up and even overtook her, but she won't let me win that easily huh.」

Lisha who noticed that smiled bitterly. Celis also nodded.

「Yes, everyone has become strong. But, I also won't lose.」

「I'll also, do my best.」

At the end Philuffy also renewed her determination. It was then that Krulcifer muttered slowly.

「Unfortunately, that's only half of it. I intentionally preserved Wise Blood was because I wished to show you my strength and—one more reason. It's in order to comprehend the true reason you fight.」

「.....!？」

Her unexpected words caused Lux to tilt his head warily.

「It doesn't look like you are forcefully made to swear loyalty to that girl just because of that collar. You are seriously trying to protect her. Your concern and feelings for her were conveyed to me.」

「Krulcifer, san.....」

Lux was unable to tell the truth with words. In response to that, Krulcifer challenged Lux to a battle with all her strength in order to probe the facts.

Now Lux noticed that she deliberately did what she did in order to surmise Lux's will.

「You haven't changed at all. Even in such a severe situation, you are paying the utmost attention so that we also won't get fatally harmed. That's really naïve but, it's the usual you who I love.」

「—!？」

Hearing that, Lux's cheeks flashed red.

The tense atmosphere of the fight instantly loosened and Lux slowly undid his fighting stance.

Even though he couldn't explain the reason, he was believing in Aeril and protected her.

He thought that he had conveyed to Krulcifer and the others that there was something for the sake of not letting the world get destroyed in his actions.

But,

「However, you don't think that it will end with that, do you?」

Krulcifer's smile suddenly changed into something cold and she drew out Fafnir's Sword Device once more.

Mind control operation in the state of wearing armor.

Lux knew about the secret skill that she would unleash after this.

The special mode that could only be used by the race of people with the highest Drag-Ride aptitude value—the Key's Supervisor, Full Connect.

Minuscule machines would assimilate with a part of the user's flesh body, exceptionally increasing the precision of Drag-Ride manipulation in that state.

She planned to activate it and challenge Lux to a duel.

「Wai-, wait a second Krulcifer-san. If you understand my feeling, then more than this—」

「Until the end that is only the talk on the surface. I know your feelings, but I won't give up on taking you back. That's why from here on, knowing Lux-kun's position and thinking, even so I will still snatch you back without fail.」

「Aa.....」

Seeing Krulcifer's proud smile, Lux too also realized her feelings.

Even if Lux was putting his trust in Aeril, the possibility that he would be betrayed wasn't zero.

Thus, her will to fight wouldn't bend here. She planned to express that much resolve—no, that much emotion towards him.

If she was unable to get a head start due to the pact, she would convey her feelings and show her will through fighting.

Receiving such feeling of Krulcifer right from the front, Lux felt that he was a happy person.

She, all of them were needing Lux and treasured him until that much.

「Then, I too have to convey it. That we should trust in Aeril.」

Lux also took a deep breath and took a stance with his great sword towards Krulcifer.

At that moment when they were going to resume the fight to share their feelings and express their wishes with each other, Aeril was staring at the device's display with a pale expression.

## Part 7

Around that time, near the old castle.

Slightly at the front of the fortress for capturing Avalon, several hundred Drag-Knights were in battle formation.

They were waiting for the signal of battle along with enough fighting spirit.

〔Informing the Lord, the imperial princess of the Holy Arcadia Empire. We, the representatives of the world alliance have come in front of you all just as you wished. I wish to propose a negotiation for peace. If you release the Seven Dragon Paladins, we will consider it as your side's will to negotiate!〕

The one announcing that through the Dragon Voice of the Drake beside him was the prime minister of the New Kingdom, Nulph.

The leaders of each country were waiting in the fortress. Nulph was entrusted with the right of command as representative.

Reinforcement Drag-Knights with numbers that reached several hundred also came along with the sovereigns of the seven countries.

Queen Raffi of the New Kingdom came, guarded by four Drag-Knights using strengthened general type Drag-Rides. These four were chosen from the best among the forces borrowed from the four great nobles.

The sovereigns of the other countries also gathered skilled Drag-Knights to guard them. The figure of Alterize, the butler of the Einvolk house from the Ymir Theocracy was also there.

In other words, they really had gathered all their remaining battle force and came here with the resolve—to conquer the old castle even without the Seven Dragon Paladins.

Of course, on the surface the force was to back up the peaceful negotiation to happen, but it was nothing more than a mask.

If there was a chance, they would get a jump on the Lords and exterminate them.

The Lord's castle that was floating in front of the old castle—Heaven Palace gave no reply.

『We will only wait for five more minutes. In case there is no reply, we will attack without mercy towards your castle that is floating in the air!』

Prime Minister Nulph who sensed that used the Drag-Ride's voice amplifier function once more and announced the declaration of war.

Due to the provocation of the Abyss called Shadow which could mimic a human appearance and behavior, all the countries felt apprehensive of the people's insurrection. They finally had no choice but to take action.

If they didn't show an action that was easy to understand like exterminating the Lords, the people might misunderstand that the Shadow's information was correct.

And then, with the hard fighting of the White Ridge knight order that was led by the aide of the Blackend Kingdom's Seven Dragon Paladin, Zweigbergk, and with the assistance of Lisha and the others, the Abyss around the old castle were finally cleaned up.

There was no option of letting go of this good chance.

Thus, Prime Minister Nulph proclaimed the time limit of waiting for five minutes.

Everyone gulped nervously while looking up to the airborne ship in the air.

The majority of the Abyss that were the enemy army had already been taken away and they had advanced until in front of the old castle.

The Drag-Knights' cannon muzzles glared at the Heaven Palace that was the Lord's castle. They were holding their breath waiting for the time of battle.

It was a tense silence.

When the hand of the clock passed three minutes, Prime Minister Nulph glared to the sky.

He took in a deep breath to give out the signal of all-out attack. It was at that timing.

『Good grief, at last.』

It was a voice that Prime Minister Nulph had also heard many times in the war council—the reply from the first imperial princess Listelka could be heard in magnified state from the Heaven Palace.

That was a sigh of exasperation and disappointment.

『Honestly, I've been tired of waiting. Because, from the beginning this is what I wanted. I have been waiting all along for this time. I've been waiting continuously since I woke up several years ago.....no, since sleeping several hundred years ago, to bring down the hammer on the foolish masses.』

「.....」

- Murmur\*, the alliance army's Drag-Knights taking position in front of the old castle were shaken. Prime Minister Nulph frowned further.

『If you are trying to buy time foolishly, you will only shorten your remaining life, your highness imperial princess. Two minutes remaining.』

Prime Minister Nulph declared that while opening the lid of his pocket watch with one hand.

Next he opened his mouth once more to fill the gap.

『We have finished grasping with Drake's radar that there are no Abyss around you all as well as your lack of allied Drag-Knights. If you are bluffing, it has been seen through. Know that instead of negotiation to draw out advantage, this is only worsening our impression of you.』

Prime Minister Nulph threatened with a tone that was gradually strengthening.

In contrast with that, Listelka replied with a tone that was gentle to the end.

『Negotiation? What do you mean? I apologize but I refuse it. There is nothing that I can give in return to the presentation of merely the life of all of you.』

「—!？」

Listelka's sentence that came from the Heaven Palace caused Nulph's face to cramp and he closed his mouth.

Right now the Lords should have no way to take on nearly a thousand Drag-Knights in total.

All the division commanders of Dragon Marauder had also died in battle, and the remnants were only around a few dozen Drag-Knights.

Even those remnants were managing the Shadows that were carrying out incitement at various places. The only action they could take was only monitoring at best.

And yet, this confidence of the Lord was puzzling.

The enemy was seeing this combat force of the alliance troops as completely nonexistent.

『I called all of you, the powers that be, along with quite a number of Drag-Knights here in order to massacre all of you, leaving none alive. The job of all of you from now is to die quickly. I have no intention to let even one person escape from here for the sake of my ruling of the world from here on.』

『Tsu..... one more minute!』

Listelka declared war indifferently.

Prime Minister Nulph grinded his teeth after receiving a reply that was far more terrifying than a mere threat.

Even the elite Drag-Knights who also heard the voice emitted anger from their bodies and their grip on their Drag-Ride's control stick strengthened.

Their fighting spirit boiled up like a heat haze. It was then that Listelka's voice came.

『Then, this is a bit of an advance notice from me too. The countdown of twelve days was a means to gather all of you to this execution ground, so I will annul it right now. In exchange I will read out loud the remainder of your life.』

It was the same gentle voice like when she first showed up before Nulph and the others.

And then Listelka declared with a graceful manner.

『Fifteen minutes. Even so perhaps that is my overestimation. The time needed to clean up small fries like all of you might be even shorter.』

『—All troops, prepare for battle! We will move to subjugate the Lords from here on!』

Nulph who ran out of patience finally gave the signal for the battle to start.

『The target is the Heaven Palace floating in front of the old castle! Wyvern force, fly to the sky and approach for bombardment with Cannon. Wurm force is to aim from the ground with the support of Drake! Don't let even one get away!』

『All of you aren't listening to my words since just now isn't it? It's better to look at your surroundings first before looking up to the Heaven Palace you know?』

『What?』

Listelka's words that she said along with a sigh caused Nulph to make a dubious face.

『Magialca Zen Vanfrick is really something. If she set up the base too far from the old castle then it would be difficult to attack, but putting the base too close would mean falling into a trap. But, for the likes of you, you all can be easily surrounded if I can have you come forward.』

『I'm tired of hearing your nonsense! Prepare yourself!』

Right after that, one of the hot-blooded soldiers turned the Cannon of his Wurm towards the Heaven Palace.

The distance was far so the Cannon's power would decline, even so if the armor received strengthening support from special equipment type Drake, then enough output could be produced.

When that soldier was charging energy for the starting shot before the all-out bombardment, the soldier beside him suddenly raised a bewildered voice.

『O, oi-!? What's with your armor!? Something is sticking on it?』

「Hm.....? Wha—!?’

Hearing what the soldier pointed out, the Wyrm user who was readying his Cannon became speechless.

From above the armor, there were strange bluish white tentacles clinging.

But, the soldier who pointed that out—furthermore more than ten soldiers at the surrounding were also in the same situation.

「This is bad! The Abyss are appearing from underground! Everyone, strengthen your barrier!」

A Drag-Knight squad leader wearing an EX Wyvern quickly cut apart the tentacles coiling around his body.

His feeling of relieve after escaping the predicament only lasted briefly.

The tentacles that regenerated with speed that the eye couldn't follow coiled around the squad leader's body once more.

「Wha, what is this regeneration ability.....!? It's not a normal Abyss! Don't tell me—gueah!」

Without even any time to feel shock, the tied up Drag-Knight had his armor pressured and his torso broke.

Without pause his internal organs spewed out from his mouth and he expired.

「This is.....no such thing, such thing isn't— There is no way this thing is the Ark's Ragnarok, Poseidon!」

Nulph who had received the report in the past knew that figure and groaned.

Countless tentacles growing out from underground one after another.

The faces of the New Kingdom troops who were facing those showed terror and unrest.

Of course, they had resolved themselves already when accompanying their sovereigns to the decisive battlefield.

Whether they would face the Lords' Drag-Knights, or a great swarm of the Abyss, or Sacred Eclipse—

But, when those things appeared together with the rumble in the ground, their resolve was blown away.

「Pri, Prime Minister Nulph! Re, reaction of the Abyss is—」

At that time, a Drake user of the alliance army let out a shaking voice.

「From the underground!? Until now there wasn't any reaction but, how many appeared!?」

「Se, seven! There are only reactions of seven Abyss—n, no, this huge size, how.....!?」

- DON-!\*<sup>\*</sup>, at that moment the ground exploded along with a thunderous sound.

The road and soil of the abandoned city burst open and swirls of dust rose.

Their sight was covered for only more than ten seconds along with confusion. In that time several dozen screams overlapped.

「What!? Our position is changing by itself! In front of us the enemy is—ageh!?」

A huge steel arm that was even thicker than the mast of a large ship.

It shot out with speed that the eye couldn't follow and smashed a Wyvern user of the Ymir Theocracy.

While its physical strength went without saying, there was also how that Wyvern user who should be on the ground within a formation was suddenly thrown to the sky where there was nothing.

「That is—Deus ex Machina!? It should be in Ymir Theocracy's Ruin, Lux-dono should have defeated it the other day, why!?」

The elite force of the Ymir Theocracy.

The butler of the Einvolk house who came as its squad leader, Alterize yelled spontaneously.

The Drag-Knights of the Ymir Theocracy were smashed one after another. Flesh bits and metal fragments were mixed and scattered.

But, the screams didn't stop there.

「What is this huge spherical Abyss! Our attacks don't work! Everything is reflected back—」

A spherical shaped Ragnarok with growing wings, Metatron's attack reflection.

Before Marcafal Kingdom's elite force could form a countermeasure against that, they got hit fully by the reflected all-out bombardment and got routed.

Furthermore at the right wing—the Drag-Knights of the Vanheim Principality received the attack of a wolf Ragnarok that breathed out absolute zero air—Fenrir and more than ten of them froze to death.

Next a great demon Ragnarok, Iblis's mental pollution caused Blackend Kingdom's troops to fall into chaos.

The formation of Turkimes Confederation also collapsed when they were pierced by the branches of Yggdrasil that possessed tough life force and the ability to increase resistance due to its strengthening ability.

And then, the army of the Heiburg Republic was also scattered everywhere when they were shot through by several thousand feathers clad in flame like fire arrows. The attack came from the undying bird Ragnarok, Phoenix, whose true shape wasn't even revealed.

「This is, impossible! How can such thing—!」

They assumed that they would fight Sacred Eclipse and a large army of the Abyss, but the simultaneous attack by seven Ragnarok was unexpected.

Every single one of them rivaled several hundred Abyss, and they were equipped with atrocious special abilities like an evil god.

Such terrifying enemies were surrounding their force and launched attacks from all directions.

Even their trump card—the remaining first class soldiers weren't a match against this ambush and they fell apart.

An elite force of nearly a thousand Drag-Knights that were the combination force of seven countries. Twenty percent of it fell in a few minutes since the

beginning of the fight.

For capable soldiers, this was a situation where they had to retreat without delay, but they were surrounded so they couldn't do that.

If they tried to break through forcefully and exposed their backs, they wouldn't be able to avoid total annihilation.

Thus—there was nothing they could do.

It was a picture of hell.

Within the chaos, Prime Minister Nulph could do nothing except raise his voice.

「How!? Why!? Why are the seven Ragnarok that should have already been defeated here!?」

『It's because they were resurrected, by this me, the shrine maiden of oracle.』

As though she had been waiting for that, Listelka immediately answered from the Heaven Palace.

『My little sister, the spy who was sent to the Vanheim Principality with the name Coral—Aeril Vi Arcadia has operated the function of Avalon just now. That is to say, she had pushed the last switch to revive the seven Ragnarok and liberate them.』

- Flash\*, a giant framework of light surfaced from under the Heaven Palace and the side face of Aeril and Lux were projected there.

「.....Guh, uu!」

Prime Minister Nulph who saw that couldn't even curse back.

Everything was within Listelka's scheme.

He finally understood that they were made to dance within her palm.

## Part 8

「Haa.....haa, haah.....！」

On the other hand, around that time—underground the old castle, in a great hall at the deepest part of Avalon's surface level floor.

In front of the device for opening the door to the deep level floor, the pale faced Aeril was breathing roughly.

The sound of battle on the surface didn't reach until this Avalon.

In exchange, the scene in front of the old castle was reflected on a surface of the silver wall with terrible clarity. It proved that the switch that Aeril pushed was something that couldn't be taken back by any means.

Those Drag-Knights of ability were the trump card of all the countries, but they were helpless before the combined attack from seven Ragnarok. Their lives were stolen one after another.

People who lost their armaments, the injured people, people with their fear induced and ran away.

People who showed weakness were heartlessly crushed and their voice vanished.

Seeing such a hellish picture that was soaked with blood, Lux and Krulcifer who were displaying offense and defense in full power until now stood still where they couldn't even make any voice.

〔This is your achievement, Aeril. You have successfully accomplished your true mission as a Lord. With this, I'll also give the greatest consideration even to your personal wish.〕

「.....Aeril, this is—!？」

Lux could only murmur dumbfoundedly at the unimaginable happening.

The device that Aeril offered her blood to and activated wasn't to open the door to the deep level floor, but to release the revived Ragnarok.

At first Lux wondered whether he was betrayed, but seeing the sweat trickling from Aeril's forehead, most likely that wasn't it.

From here it was only Lux's assumption but, this was Listelka's trap.

(If she had calculated everything until this far, what a schemer.....!) Listelka had predicted Aeril's insubordination.

No, more accurately it was a bit different.

She also took into account the possibility of Aeril having rebellious thought and she rolled the dice so that she would definitely win no matter what came out.

Because the Lords lacked man power, she wished to make use of Lux to capture Avalon, but in the worst case that Aeril sympathized with the world alliance and stole a march, it would be troubling.

At the same time Listelka herself also had a task.

It was the purging of the royalty and nobles and the majority of the Drag-Knights of all the countries, which would link to ruling the world from now on.

When the path to Avalon was opened and it became possible for her to interfere into that system further, at that moment she prioritized the revival of the greatest combat force, the seven Ragnarok, then she tricked Aeril and made her activate the release function.

What was truly terrifying wasn't just how she guided the main force and influential people of all the countries into a trap, but the way she used Aeril and Lux.

With this, there was no way Lux could trust Aeril anymore.

The reason was, no matter the process of how it happened, the result was a trap after all.

She used Lux and killed the elite force of the world alliance.

And then even now there was a possibility that she would try to drag Lisha

and the others into even more schemes.

「Shit—was this their objective from the start!? Second imperial princess!」

「I don't understand the detailed reason but, it looks like we cannot just entrust him to you like this.」

Lisha raised her voice, while Krulcifer calmly blamed Aeril.

Now Aeril had no more options of stealing a march on the Lords.

She was currently perceived by the world alliance as their greatest enemy who pushed the switch to revive the Ragnarok. Lisha and the others also felt the same.

In other words, Listelka had stolen Aeril's path of escape where it would also be impossible for her to reconcile with Lux and the others.

That was Listelka's one more scheme.

(—No, I don't know the real truth.)

The feeling that Aeril conveyed, the resolve that she showed to Lux, there was a possibility that all of them were fake.

No, thinking about how she had tricked everyone from the start, it might be natural to think that this time was also the same, that she tricked Lux and made use of him.

The reality of the matter was that the combat force of the world alliance was taken away one after another, and there was an unavoidable destruction right before their eyes.

Then perhaps he shouldn't try to help Aeril anymore even if he had to turn his back on the order and got killed by the Wedge.

(But, I.....)

To Lux, Aeril's figure who was shaking in despair beside him right now didn't seem like an act.

Even so, there was no way he could mistake his choice.

(What should I do? What should—)

Under the extreme situation, Aeril's expression suddenly changed.

Zahhak's armored arm quickly gripped the Breath Whip and a twisting line tore apart the room's space.

「.....-!？」

- Pashi-!\* an impact ran along with a flash, the ceiling and floor were smashed.

While countless rubble crumbled down, Aeril made a dry smile.

「Fuu, I thought that I'll be able to trick you all for a bit more but, as expected that's not possible now.」

「.....Aeril?」

Lux's back shivered hearing that chilly tone.

Aeril turned a gaze that was tinged with chilling dark shadow and started talking calmly.

「.....Sorry Lux-kun. But you are the one in the wrong, because you believed me when I am one of the Lords, someone who originally should be your enemy.—Well, in exchange it made you easy to handle though, that was why I chose you from among the prisoners. My eyes aren't wrong.」

A wicked smile that he had never seen before from her.

The girl laughed mockingly along with a disdaining gaze.

「But, you are a failure as a hero you know? I was able to reach here thanks to you. Thanks to you buying me time, I could activate the revived Ragnarok. Getting tricked this easily—it's your fault that everyone died.」

「-.....!？」

Lux trembled when she brought up the heart of the matter.

That was right.

In the end it became something like this because he only thought of wanting to trust Aeril.

Right after that, Lisha who was enraged by those words raised an angry voice.

「You bastard.....! Even though you are binding Lux with that Wedge and tricked him.....！」

「—My bad but, can you step aside from there Lux-kun? If you cannot do it because of the collar, then I will stop your movement for sure this time.」

「.....」

Lisha and Krulcifer prepared their respective special armaments and put their breathing in order.

The two were serious.

Even though they had been seeing Aeril as enemy until now, they also vaguely held expectation from her, but now such feeling had vanished.

Or rather, with how the main force of the world alliance was currently getting destroyed by the seven Ragnarok, they couldn't waste even a second more.

No matter what Aeril's true feeling was, they would defeat her here.

If Lux stood in their way, they would overcome him.

Such will could be sensed from them.

「Unfortunately I cannot do that. I'm not so free I can keep all of you company. That's why Lux, I'll leave them to you. Protect me. Block their attack and prevent them from chasing me!」

Right after that, Aeril made Zahhak flew with a fearless smile and headed towards a passage that connected to another room from the control room.

She planned to return to the old castle by heading ahead to the portal for returning back that they found before this.

「It's pointless even if you all try to destroy that collar! If an impact hits it, in less than a second electricity will flow and burn the body. It will produce a power that can deal instant death in response to any act that tries to destroy that collar! Now, fight between each other! I'll show you all the hope of the world getting eradicated!」

「Wait, second princess!」

Lisha flew her Tiamat to chase after Aeril, and Krulcifer followed behind her.

After hesitating for less than an instant, Lux also reflexively chased after them and exited the control room.

「What should I do! I, what should I—!」

It wouldn't even be a few minutes until the destruction of the world alliance.

If that was over, the seven Ragnarok would crush the defense base that was commanded by Lolotte and massacre Queen Raffi and the others, the representatives of all the countries.

Hesitating for more than this wouldn't be allowed.

He had to decide right now.

But, in any case it was impossible.

Aeril was heading to the portal to return to the old castle that they discovered ahead of this passage before this, to escape from Lisha and Krulcifer.

If he could at least take off this collar, this Wedge from his neck—

(—No, wait.)

At that instant, a doubt surfaced inside Lux.

The flow of events right now where they were chasing after Aeril through the straight passage that they confirmed before this.

(Why did she deliberately escape in the direction of the portal that was known only to me and her?) 『Lux! Use your Divine Raiment! Fully open Bahamut's function, strengthen your offensive power and bring them down!』

He could hear Aeril's scolding through the Dragon Voice.

With that one sentence, a belief was born inside Lux.

「I see, that's how it is!」

What Aeril was trying to do, what the truth was.

And then also, what he had to choose no matter what right now.

「Don't think that we can be stopped just by escaping into a passage! Legion!」

Lisha consecutively fired Tiamat's special armament, the arrowhead shaped projectile weapons, aiming at the back of the fleeing Aeril.

「Kuh.....」

The moment she dodged that by taking twisting trajectory, Krulcifer's Fafnir sniped with freezing bullet.

That shot that was backed by the use of the Divine Raiment of future prediction splendidly froze Zahhak's back wings and shaved its mobility.

Zahhak lost its driving force and tumbled down. It swung the Breath Whip, but it was blocked by the automatic defense of Auto Shield.

「—Do it, Lux! Use Reload on Fire and defeat them!」

「You think I'll let you, Lord! Your ambition ends here!」

Lisha readied her Cannon, in addition Krulcifer took the stance of consecutive shots.

If the Cannon was fired after the armor was frozen, the barrier wouldn't work well and the armor would be easily smashed apart.

Krulcifer who foresaw that fired the freezing bullets, next Lisha pulled the Cannon's trigger. At that time a single silhouette appeared above the attack trajectory.

「.....Wha-!?」

「Lux-kun-!?」

Lux stood in front of Aeril wearing Bahamut.

The attack of the two directly hit from above his barrier.

「Uh, aah.....!」

The armor creaked and Lux groaned from the impact that reached his body.

Even so he became a shield and received all the attack that was aimed at Aeril.

「Shit! If only that Wedge wasn't there—!」

「No, that's not it. At the very least he isn't protecting her because of the Wedge.」

Beside Lisha who was grinding her teeth, Krulcifer pointed out calmly.

It was because she noticed that behind Lux, the cold smile that was on Aeril's face until now had vanished.

「.....Why」

A crack entered her mask and it broke into pieces.

Seeing Lux covering for her and receiving the attack, causing blood to flow from his shoulder and forehead, Aeril raised a trembling voice.

「Why, are you still saving me!? Why didn't you use your Divine Raiment!?」

What Lux saw there, was Coral's expression.

It was exactly the expression of his friend who told him she believed in him.

「You were telling that for me right? All that time since just now. If I use Bahamut's Divine Raiment, this Wedge can be taken off, you were telling me that.」

「.....-!？」

Lisha and Krulcifer gasped in surprise at Lux's statement.

「The Wedge's electricity will activate in less than a second when an impact hit it. However—among the Seven Dragon Paladins, it's only me who can overcome that as long as I wear Bahamut. If I apply tuning like Singlen's Senjin, and use Reload on Fire that is concentrated to one point to the collar's electricity.....」

「——What!? In other words, what does that mean?」

Lisha was bewildered, beside her Krulcifer brushed up her hair coolly.

「.....So it's something like that. Bahamut's Divine Raiment originally can apply compression strengthening to every kind of phenomenon. In other words, if Reload on Fire is activated to the energy output and it's used on the Wedge that Lux is wearing——」

In the first five seconds, the power of electric attack that Wedge emitted can be damped until less than ten percent.

So to speak, when the Wedge received impact and generated electric attack, if it was removed within five seconds, the collar could be removed without the

wearer receiving fatal damage.

Aeril had been giving Lux that hint continuously.

「Impossible! If she is an ally, then why didn't she take off Lux's Wedge from the start!?」

「There is a circumstance that doesn't allow her to do so.....seeing it like that is only valid I believe. Most likely she wanted to capture Avalon together with Lux until a certain floor, right? That was why she intentionally didn't take off the Wedge. But that opening was used by Listelka and it became this kind of development, am I wrong?」

「.....」

Aeril looked down without saying anything.

That was the answer.

With Listelka's scheme that made her released the seven Ragnarok, Aeril considered it as already impossible to have Lux and others believed in her, so she made it to look like she was a villain.

She made everyone to think that she was tricking Lux from the start to make them try to kill her.

She intended to guide them until the portal to return to the old castle and then die.

「Why didn't you attack me? Why!? Why are you still, trying to trust someone like me—」

「Because—I wanted to believe. The same like Aeril.」

「-.....!?」

The face of Aeril who saw Lux's smile distorted into grief.

「If you really planned to trick us, there wouldn't be any need to keep acting until the Ragnarok were revived. It would be the victory of the Lords if you only activated the Wedge, killing me and then escaped. However, Aeril was leaving behind a prospect of victory for us. You intentionally guided them until this portal, and even taught me the method to remove the Wedge for the sake of

the remaining Seven Dragon Paladins.]

「——」

If Lux discovered the way to remove the Wedge using Bahamut, he would also be able to use the portal to return to the old castle and save the remaining Seven Dragon Paladins too.

Lisha and Krulcifer, and then Celis and Philuffy who were standing behind them had their breath taken away from listening to the conversation of the two.

They finally noticed that she wasn't an enemy.

『Aeril. You aren't forgetting your duty are you?』

A voice came inside the small room, tearing apart the small silence.

Listelka's interference ability in Avalon.

Because they had moved until the room where the portal was located, she was able to send her voice there.

『There is no more need to trick them. Please return. The place where you belong is right here.』

That was a kind of threat.

With the image that was broadcasted towards the world alliance before this, Aeril was considered as an enemy by them.

If she didn't return to Listelka right now, there would be no place for her to return home to. She wouldn't have any ally anywhere.

「That's right, isn't it.....」

Aeril responded to her elder sister's words with an expression of nihilism.

「Perhaps in the first place, we the Lords have no proper place to belong to. Perhaps it's a fate of being unable to live without ruling over someone else. The world before we slept was like that.」

『Yes, exactly as you said. That's why we will monopolize Avalon. We will reign as the rulers of this new world.』

Listelka's voice was tinged with joy. However Aeril powerlessly shook her head.

「—But, that's a wrong impression. Our true nature is ruler, an existence that is worshipped and feared. Or perhaps we can only become an existence that is shunned. But, it's only him who believed in me who was completely tricked by Nee-san.....」

「Ah.....」

Aeril's gaze suddenly turned towards Lux. Receiving that gaze, a small voice leaked out from Lux's mouth.

Lux who guessed Aeril's wish applied compression strengthening to his Wedge using Reload on Fire.

At that instant, Zahhak's Breath Whip instantly severed the Wedge.

『—Ah!』

「This is my answer, Nee-san. Even if I'm to be executed by the world alliance, I won't regret anymore. I will obtain Avalon myself by my own will!」

「You.....」

Lisha who saw that muttered unconsciously. Krulcifer also let out a sigh.

In addition Celis and Philuffy who appeared from behind them were also nodding after guessing the situation.

That Aeril was siding with them.

That she would fight along with them in order to save the world.

『—That's unfortunate, Aeril.』

Listelka's words came back along with a long sigh.

『I even harbored respect to your devotion, but I didn't think that you were this foolish.』

There was no modulation and heat within that voice.

It was a tone so cold that it would give anyone chills.

『I won't tell you not to be affectionate to pets, but it's a disgrace to the

imperial family to do something like throwing away family for the sake of livestock. You can learn your place together with them.]

- Pshu\*, the voice transmission was severed completely with that.

But, Lux and Aeril had no hesitation anymore even after receiving that war declaration.

「Let's quickly withdraw Lux. We have to return to the old castle using that portal and liberate the Seven Dragon Paladins. There is no other way to save the world from those seven Ragnarok than that.」

Everyone nodded in agreement with the voice of Celis that still had a pronounced trace of fatigue in it.

「Yeah, we somehow steeled ourselves to come until this far, but we are also nearly at our limit.....」

Everyone was fatigued from the decisive battle against Dragon Marauder. Still, not much time had passed since they were injured.

That Lisha and the others were able to move until this far in such a short period of time and display such fierce fighting was due to their mental strength and the fact that Lux's life was in danger.

「It's pathetic but, we can only entrust the world's fate to them.....」

Krulcifer's words indicated everything.

The alliance army was already starting to retreat to the fortress.

But, the kings of various countries and their aides were gathered inside the fortress that was located in less than a few kl from there.

After murdering the retreating force along with the kings, the Ragnarok would surely march to every part of the world.

If that happened then it would be the end.

This world would fall into Listelka's hands before reaching Avalon.

「Let's go, Lux-kun!」

「Right.」

Lux nodded to Aeril's words, then they all entered the portal.

The circle drawn on the floor shined and light enveloped them.

From here on it was a race against time.

Hayes was taking command at the frontline in front of the old castle, so they had to save the Seven Dragon Paladins before Listelka and Hayes returned.

And then—the remaining seven Ragnarok.

Would they be able to hold back those overwhelming threats once more with the remaining force?

「-.....」

Wrapped in light, the sensation of weight vanished.

When they noticed, their location had turned into the back entrance of the old castle.

「.....Yosh!」

If he remembered correctly, the Seven Dragon Paladins were imprisoned in the chapel within the old castle's grounds.

At that instant when Lux was going to head there in full speed, he felt a freezing killing intent behind him.

—

—GAuUUUUN-!

—

「Wha-!？」

Lux, Aeril, and also Lisha and the others all lost their voice.

The thunderous sound striking from the sky.

The remains of the shockwave struck their eardrums and shook their brain.

It was over within an instant.

The huge chapel where the Seven Dragon Paladins except Lux were imprisoned was smashed apart with just a single stroke.

「That's, impossible.....」

『—Naturally this is how it would turn out. If you betray us, then the Seven Dragon Paladins are useless objects. Not dealing with them without even any chance to brainwash them is dangerous.』

This time Listelka's voice descended from Heaven Palace that was floating above them.

Beside Aeril who was standing still looking dumbfounded, Lux felt a strange out of place feeling.

「This strike is Hayes's Nidhogg.....!? No—」

Lux was about to speak, but he erased that thought because there wasn't any possibility of that.

Divine Drag-Ride Nidhogg's Astral Line was indeed a Divine Raiment of cutting through a wide range.

But, because it also cut through space itself, the destruction would draw a single beautiful line.

This time it was different from that.

There was no doubt that it was a powerful attack in all respects, but the impact dispersed like a crack, breaking the whole chapel.

Besides, Hayes should be observing the Ragnarok's situation slightly away from here at the frontlines.

「-.....!？」

At that time, something was reflected in the corner of Lux's vision.

The shadow of a Drag-Knight wearing huge armor.

「That's—don't tell me.....」

A jet black Drag-Ride that he felt like he had seen it from somewhere.

Lux kept looking to the sky with that afterimage burned into his eyes.

## Part 9

When the silver door was opened, the silver haired girl wearing a crown lifted her face.

「I have returned, Listelka-sama.」

「Thank you for your hard work Mishis. It seems that you have also defeated the revived Sacred Eclipse safely. Good work.」

In order to return to the Heaven Palace that was floating above the old castle, Mishis didn't use the land battle type Azi Dahaka, but switched to a strengthened type general purpose Drag-Ride Ex Wyvern and went back.

She was obstructed from erasing her target, the remaining combat force of the New Kingdom, because of the Sacred Eclipse that Aeril lured.

「It is my delight to serve. But, I failed to finish those Syvalles lot. They are more skilled than I imagined.」

Mishis reported with her expression that was like an iron mask without a single twitch of her eyebrow.

But, Listelka shook her pure white hair in a good mood and smiled tolerantly.

「My my, there is no need to respect the enemy's honor here. Something like an enemy that can match you, the strongest Key's Supervisor who was lauded as the Anti Drag-Knight, didn't exist from the start in this world.」

「No, the greatest cause of my victory was because those two hid their injury and fought while suppressing their fatigue. Even if I used Azi Dahaka in perfect condition, the next battle won't go so simply like this time.」

Mishis admonished herself with calmness to the end.

The result ended with an overwhelming victory for Mishis, but the real strength of Celis and Philuffy were also immeasurable.

The maid estimated that if the battle was brought into a decisive battle of a brief duration, there was a possibility that they could instead prepare a countermeasure.

「How careful. But, it's really reliable for my attendant. After all, my excellent and reassuring little sister had left just now—」

Listelka smiled looking somewhat lonely.

Mishis was already told the information that Aeril was rebelling.

「Does your highness really have no intention to bring back the second imperial princess?」

「I really want to do that if we have the leeway for it though.」

Listelka sighed with a troubled expression.

If someone who didn't know anything about her saw it, then it would look like the figure of an older sister who was actually worried about her little sister even though she had been betrayed.

But, the maid who had served her for a long time knew that there was a completely different emotion within her words.

「I wish we can capture her alive and put her into custody. Like that I will be able make her brain dead. At the very least I will be able to retrieve her ovum and make use of her as a flesh puppet. If not, she won't be useful for the Lords from here on. There are also other preserved genes remaining, but there is almost no gene of the Arcadia Empire's pure lineage.」

「——」

That attitude which only thought of even her true blood relative as nothing more than a tool to revive the empire.

Mishis even felt fright seeing the face of Listelka who was speaking that calmly.

(However, perhaps that is only natural.....)

The clan that reigned at the top of this world for a long time.

They hated the act of 『betrayal』 that became the cause of their destruction

more than anything.

Similarly, Mishis also didn't harbor any doubt towards her master's decision.

As the Lord's <sup>partner</sup>servant, she had flawless education given to her to devote her everything for her master which was the only one protecting the <sup>Xfer</sup>Key's Supervisor.

She was a maid of steel that suppressed her own emotions.

Even if Aeril was one of the Lords, if it was Listelka's order then she would take care of her.

「However, the attack just now, could it be—」

「Yeah, it was my doing, Mishis.」

The maid noticed a presence from behind her and turned around.

There a man with silver hair and grey eyes was standing.

Although he gave a vaguely rough impression to those who looked at him, he was a youth that let out an aristocratic atmosphere. Fugil Arcadia was standing there.

He had already dispelled the Drag-Ride he was wearing, but it was him who destroyed the chapel just now by Listelka's instruction.

On Listelka's head, the electronic terminal with golden geometrical patterns on it, the 『Crown』 was placed.

It was a support tool to connect even deeper to Avalon's system, and it was also the controller of this Heaven Palace.

She grasped the battle situation of various places, and also observed Aeril's exploration of Avalon from here, but as expected it seemed the burden to her mind and body was considerable because she was taking it off.

「You have destroyed the chapel where the Seven Dragon Paladins were placed, just as I wished. I appreciate your efforts, Fugil.」

Listelka thanked not with a face of an imperial princess, but she spoke with an intimate tone that was vaguely like a maiden.

In contrast, Fugil only kept showing a composed smile and lightly nodded in

response.

「I didn't want to have you who are my knight to sortie, but this time there was no time after all. But—wasn't your condition superb just now?」

Listelka gave a praise that was filled with anticipation.

But, Fugil only showed a slight smile without change and quietly denied it.

「Certainly, the function of the special armament worked quite well. But I believe it's still difficult to call it as flawless. There was no definite feedback from that attack.」

「My? Fugil is really too modest. If that chapel was destroyed by one attack, then I believe it's powerful enough though—」

Listelka put her hands together and talked in delight, but Fugil made a cynical smile.

「It was easier to manage those lot by quarantining them. Such thought was a mistake—no, should I call it a slight slackness. This isn't Lux's strategy. But there is someone among my little brother's subordinates who can execute such plan.」

「.....? What are you saying, Fugil?」

Listelka tilted her head and asked, but Fugil was silent. He only responded with a smile.

「More importantly, I believe it's necessary to deal with Lux Arcadia and the others who returned to the back of the old castle. The world alliance has already retreated, but in any case when they escaped back to their base, they won't be able to escape from the fortress where the kings of all the countries have gathered. They will surely be crushed by the seven Ragnarok.」

Saying that, Mishis glanced at Fugil.

Rather than her who was exhausted from the battle against Sacred Eclipse or calling back Hayes who was watching over the battle in the frontline, she was thinking that perhaps they should send this man to subjugate Lux and his group.

But, the maid's plan didn't reach her master Listelka.

「Fugil has his duty to guard me, so I cannot send him. There is still some remnants of Dragon Marauder in the old castle correct? Let's have them intercept that group. Let's also control the remaining Abyss with horn flute.」

「.....」

Listelka who possessed a strong suspicion of others put absolute trust in Fugil because of nothing more than him saving her life once.

More than several hundred years ago—

Listelka and the others, the imperial family who met the rebellion of the family of traitors tried to hide in the Ruin Ark along with few attendants and slept there.

But, along with the flow of time, the descendants of the enemy, the royalties of the Arcadia Empire sniffed out that location. They invaded and were about to kill everyone, it was then that Fugil saved them. That was the reason for her trust.

Furthermore, after that, Fugil destroyed his own empire, and now—with his cooperation, the Ruins were captured and they were able to come this far.

Mishis who woke up after that had been told many times about that sequence of events from the girl who was her master.

Thus, Listelka saw Fugil as a hero, at the same time she was directing her good will towards him that was the same like love.

Mishis had no intention to voice an objection to her master's feelings.

However in Mishis's point of view, Fugil wasn't looking at them.

No—perhaps.

Right after the maid was absorbed in such thought, the Heaven Palace moved and slowly flew in the sky.

When she looked, Listelka was wearing the Crown controller once more and sat down on the throne.

「Either way, it will be fine to leave Lux and the others to be dealt with later. Let's head to their fortress with this Heaven Palace. The representatives of all

countries seem to be all present there, so let's enjoy their moment of death.]

「Understood.」

Mishis nodded. Then a frame of light was projected on the metallic wall before her.

The image reflected there was right below the floating Heaven Palace—the trace of rampage of the revived seven Abyss that was left behind.

The ruins of buildings that were turned grey without any color.

The structures remaining in the castle town of the abandoned capital Guernica were tragically smashed apart. The Drag-Knights' blood was dying the area as though the old wound of the city was gouged open.

More than half of the elite force couldn't escape and almost all of them ended up dead, on the other hand all the Ragnarok had not a single scratch.

「I thought they would be lacking in strength because they had just been revived, but looks like it was just my needless anxiety.」

「I believe the situation of the battle also had a large influence on it. Most likely they were completely helpless in a situation where they were ambushed by seven Ragnarok and surrounded from all sides.」

Even if the enemies were the chosen elites, soldiers without Divine Drag-Rides fundamentally fought with group tactics in battle formation.

When their formation crumbled from the unexpected surprise attack and their force was scattered, annihilation was inevitable.

「—But, it's strange that only half of them died. Even though I thought that they wouldn't even try to escape.」

It seemed Listelka couldn't be convinced even by that overwhelming result. She tilted her head in bewilderment.

Then through her Crown, a Dragon Voice from her little sister Hayes came.

『How is your mood, Onee-sama?』

「The number of the dead is lacking there, Hayes. Even though the Ragnarok aren't wounded, how did they manage to escape?」

「That's the problem. That woman who we were on guard the most showed up.」

「—That woman?」

Listelka directed the sight of Heaven Palace from looking at directly below to turn to the front.

There, the sight of just a single Drag-Knight facing all seven Ragnarok could be seen.

Armor of deep darkness color and four legs—Yato no Kami. Wearing it was Kirihiime Yoruka.

「I see. So the person we have been waiting for has come.」

But, regardless of the appearance of a powerful enemy, Listelka showed a shadowed gaze and smiled.

「—The Ragnarok absolutely won't be brought down with just her alone. With this the last possibility of the enemy turning the tables will also be crushed.」

Even though Yoruka was facing seven Ragnarok simultaneously, her movement wasn't offensive at the least.

She maintained a distance that wasn't too close or too far, luring the enemy's focus into herself and dodged the attacks. And then—she was gradually retreating towards the fortress.

Even Ragnarok fundamentally possessed the same nature as an Abyss.

In other words, bestial instinct—their principle was to prioritize aiming at someone who was nearby or attacking them.

There, Yoruka attracted the attention of the Ragnarok, saving the remaining force of around five hundred Drag-Knights and secured their escape route.

Listelka's scheme to gather up the enemy force and annihilating them in one go was mostly obstructed by the appearance of Yoruka.

Even so the Lord's imperial princess acted with composure.

「This is the best development I could ask for. After all, with the Seven Dragon Paladins and the world alliance army crushed, for me she is the biggest

remaining threat. Sending Hayes and you to get rid of her will also be fine, but it's great that we can confirm her existence clearly here.]

‘But’—Listelka paused her words for a moment, then she tilted her head and a question emerged in her mind.

「This is a bit strange. She is someone who swore loyalty to that Lux Arcadia. I thought that she would completely ignored the like of the alliance army and dash straight to her master’s predicament though.]

Even though she was monitoring the front of the old castle from the Heaven Palace and placed Hayes there as defense in order to stop her.

「Indeed.]

Mishis also nodded at her master’s murmur. Then a communication through Dragon Voice from Hayes who was observing the battle situation below came.

『Oi Onee-sama. If it’s an answer, I got it yeah. Try looking to the front a bit more.』

「.....?」

Prompted by Hayes, Listelka turned the sight of Heaven Palace to the front through the Crown she was wearing.

Slightly ahead of the present location.

There was the figure of a silver haired girl in front of the fortress, gazing at the advancing Ragnarok with a nervous look.

「Airi Arcadia. Why is she there? Don’t tell me—】

『Yeah, they had seen it through most likely. That to go to the deepest part of Avalon, the blood of an Arcadia is needed for the confirmation. The confirmation will go through even with that girl if she comes to here. But, it was fine and all coming here to save her lord, but that woman was surprised at the unexpected Ragnarok’s appearance, and she switched to buy time to protect her other master, the little sister.』

「That girl is also an imperial family member of the Arcadia Empire that she is serving. What’s more that girl is necessary for the confirmation to control Avalon, so she is forced to protect her—so that’s how it is.】

Listelka chuckled in understanding.

If all the pieces the enemy was holding became clear, there wasn't anything more to fear.

They would crush the enemy's focal point here, and at the end they would get rid of Aeril along with Lux and his group.

With that it would be over.

She would make her return to the world once more with this hand.

「Then—let's teach her. The opposition of a bug, no matter how hard, is something meaningless.」

====Part 1====0 「.....As expected, this is really reckless. But perhaps the enemies are also lacking sleep, because they seem weaker than before but—even so, I who had only recovered from my injury cannot match them.」

Below where Listelka was directing her smile from the airborne ship—the Heaven Palace.

In the battlefield site where the seven Ragnarok were displaying their tyranny, Yoruka alone was continuing to make a good showing.

She weaved through the waves of powerful and wide-ranged attack, dealt a single slash when there was an opening and then took distance.

By repeating that she somehow lured the Ragnarok and let the friendly troops to escape, even so her stamina had been stolen to a terrifying degree just from fighting for three minutes.

「—SHAAAH!」

The Ragnarok that was firing feathers of flame arrows like a heavy rain—Phoenix's attack wasn't a mere flame.

The fat that was contained within those feathers would stick to the thing the feathers hit and became fuel, planting a flame that wouldn't vanish even after more than ten minutes.

A part of Yoruka's armor that was hit with the flame was flung off with Break Purge.

At the same time her surrounding was blanketed with hellfire, leaving her no place to secure a foothold.

Drag-Knights who lost consciousness breathed in the white smoke that was rolling up in great amount and died.

The bodies of the soldiers whose Drag-Rides were dispelled were cremated by Phoenix's flame.

The ice wolf Fenrir that was approaching as reinforcement forced Yoruka to dodge in a large way because of its absolute zero breath.

Even for Yoruka, continuously evading the claw and fang that were additionally attacking in high speed was a herculean task.

Furthermore Poseidon that possessed unlimited regeneration, Yggdrasil who reacted to the situation and continuously strengthened itself, Metatron that reflected attacks back, Deus ex Machina that grasped the space in control, and Iblis that polluted the mind.

Although she was fighting while retreating, Yato no Kami's barrier was already pierced and even a part of her armor was smashed.

She was able to create an opening to lure the enemies toward hers and allowed the allied troops to retreat, the opponent wasn't so soft that her side would be able to manage somehow with just that.

The elite force who showed their back to the enemies were killed one after another by the approaching Ragnarok.

Even if she wanted to use Over Limit through her Spell Code, Yoruka's current physical state didn't allow it.

The battle situation was still hopeless without any change.

Even so she gave her best and barely slowed the enemy's invasion.

She was risking her life just for that.

「Haa.....haa. Even so, it's surprising. Although this is for the sake of saving Aruji-sama, but to think I'm able to do this kind of act.」

Even though she was cornered into an overwhelming disadvantage, the glint

of Yoruka's eyes didn't turn dim.

A few kl behind her, Airi was there watching the fight while holding her breath.

The fortress base. She was standing slightly in front of it while exposing her body to the cold biting wind and prayed.

「This place is dangerous Airi-san! Can't you evacuate inside the fortress?」

A boy dressed as butler, Magialca's aide Lolotte called out to her, but Airi didn't move.

In exchange she kept turning her back to him while giving back her answer with a calm tone.

「Thank you very much for your worry. But, there is meaning in me doing something like this. No, I'm doing this in the belief that it will raise the possibility of saving Nii-san even if only slightly. That's why—」

Lolotte guessed her meaning with those words.

Airi's act of deliberately exposing her figure in front of the fortress had a definite objective.

「I understand your feeling. But the seven Ragnarok are already closing in. With how we are sheltering the sovereigns of seven countries, we are also unable to retreat from here.」

In other words if they didn't escape right away—no, even if they escaped they would be overtaken and then met a massacre.

But, even after being told about that hopeless situation, Airi kept gazing straight to the front.

Even Yoruka couldn't buy time satisfactorily against seven Ragnarok as her opponent.

Furthermore, the Drag-Knights of the alliance army who were saved by her and barely escaped alive could be seen flying here with desperate look.

「Sa, save meehee! I'll get killed!」

「It's the end! It's already overrrrr!」

「Re, retreat! Run away from here! Quickly—」

People who tossed away all their weapons and wore broken armor.

People who were bleeding from all over their body and wandered around while screaming.

And then people whose heart was broken by terror and sobbed tearfully.

Everyone similarly spoke about the despair.

—

「—Kuh! It's already, at this rate.....!」

Among those people, a woman of blooming age wearing EX Wyvern, the butler of Einfock house Alterize groaned with rough breathing.

「At the very least, we have to protect his grace the pope, so he can escape from here—!」

When Airi who was standing in front of the fortress heard that, voices suddenly came from above.

「Oi oi. The elite force for the decisive battle is saying that? Even if you guys escape until the end of this world, those guys will keep coming anyway yeah?」

First a male voice with a tone that sounded careless said that briefly.

「Even the butler of Einfock house has become disappointing. To lament like that just from this much.」

Next, it was a jesting voice of a girl that sounded very young.

「So those are Ragnarok eeeh. Looks like it will be really worth it to defeat them.」

A tone of a woman that gave the impression of belligerent fearlessness.

「That is, the same scene like when I made my threat before. But, the truth is I didn't wish for something like this at all.」

A girl's voice that had no modulation, however a strong will resided in it.

「Finally my words can be proved as correct. It's only powerful Drag-Knight who is worthy to rule over the world.」

Words that were filled with confidence along with haughty scorn could be heard.

「You all understand right, each of you need to kill one you know? I will protect the center. The rest spread out just like the instruction from before!」

A voice that sounded young, but with a way of talking that sounded mature.

The moment Lolotte heard that voice, he looked forward.

Above the watch tower at the front of the fortress—seven male and females could be seen.

When Airi noticed and looked up to the tower too, there was the back figure of her dear big brother there.

「Sorry to make you wait, Airi. And Yoruka too.」

「.....Nii-san-!?」

Airi who was slightly at the back part of the fortress's front noticed their existences.

The Seven Dragon Paladins who should have fallen into the enemy's hand and imprisoned were all present above the watch tower in front of her.

The representative of Vanheim Principality, Greifer Nest.

The representative of Ymir Theocracy, Mel Gizalut.

The representative of Heiburg Republic, Rosa Granhide.

The representative of Turkimes Confederation, Soffice Xfer.

The representative of Blackedn Kingdom, Singlen Shelbrit.

The representative of Marcafal Kingdom, Magialca Zen Vanfrick.

And then, the representative of New Kingdom Atismata, Lux Arcadia.

They faced the approaching seven Ragnarok and drew out their Sword Device.

「—Roar thunderously and become a legend. O protector of fairy, the banner of great enemy, Cuelebre.」

First Greifer pushed the trigger on the handle and went as the vanguard.

「—Two opposite of depravity competing with each other, be worn on the body and resurrect. O dragon of strife bringing ruination to heaven and earth, Ddraig Gwiber.」

Furthermore Mel pulled out her two swords Sword Device and continued after Greifer.

「—Soot of intrigue that is the wickedness, sink, lurk, deceive, and strike. O dragon of previous life without repentance, Gorynych.」

Rosa summoned a huge dragon of dark grey color with a bold smile,

「—Born from the flame, is the taboo god. Devour hatred and reason then transcend, Vritra.」

The yellow dragon that appeared in front of Sofice unfolded into countless parts.

「—The origin of all thing, the ocean, whirl powerfully to the critical pressure. Hand down the judgment of divine will that illuminate the heaven, Leviathan.」

Singlen connected with a blue huge dragon and it turned into an armor that covered his body.

「—O world snake that is liberated from fate. Challenge the holy war and take revenge to the gods, Jormungandr.」

Magialca deployed her gigantic Drag-Ride and took position on the watch tower.

「—Manifest, the violent dragon that devour the flesh and blood of gods. Sever the sky of dark clouds, Bahamut.」

For the last, Lux readied his great sword along with the jet black huge dragon.

Right here right now, it was the second coming of the last stronghold that protected the world.

—

「U, OOOooOOO.....-!」

Every single one of them equipped their Divine Drag-Ride with absolute confidence and readied their weapon.

The alliance troops who witnessed that spontaneously erupted with voice of wonder.

「However, what is happening? Why are they there—no, how did they escape!?」

The butler Lolotte was shocked in front of the fortress while asking Airi beside him.

Until now, Lolotte couldn't make contact with his master Magialca.

He wondered what happened to Lux and others who should be fallen into the Lord's hand and got locked in the old castle.

「Our comrades managed their task successfully. Just as they promised at first when we arrived here.」

「Yes. It was extremely difficult but, we somehow accomplished it.」

There, starting from Noct who was wearing EX Drake, the Triad who were similarly wearing strengthened type Drag-Ride showed their face.

「Maaan—, it was scary. But it must be that. It's the victory for Sharis's strategy. Her instinct was unusually right on the money.」

「First let's relax that we accomplished the mission. Airi-chan too, you really did your best.」

Sharis was nodding at Tillfur's words while gently caressing Airi's silver hair.

Half a day after Yoruka and co arrived at this base, they formed a strategy when they were going to head out to rescue Lux right away.

When Yoruka's Yato no Kami that was a special equipment type Divine Drag-Ride investigated using its radar through a vast range, it detected within the old castle's ground—the reaction of six living things inside the chapel, as well as more than ten Drag-Knights and several Abysses around the chapel.

And then, the radar also confirmed the reaction of Divine Drag-Rides of Lisha and Krulcifer who followed after Celis and Philuffy.

Seeing how the reaction of Lux couldn't be found inside the old castle, and how Lisha and Krulcifer entered underground, the possibility was high that Lux

and Aeril were there.

With how Lisha and others were already chasing after Lux and stormed into Avalon, the possibility was low that they would be able to make it in time even if they followed.

‘In that case’—Airi’s proposal was to save the remaining Seven Dragon Paladins and they decided it as their strategy.

Even if Lux managed to become free alone, with Seven Dragon Paladins still imprisoned and stayed as hostage, their side wouldn’t be able to fight with full power after that.

Yoruka also complied with that persuasion of Airi and she tried to enter into the old castle that was inadequately defended.

But, midway a single problem surfaced.

The seven Ragnarok that appeared and surrounded the alliance army, and the Heaven Palace floating in the sky.

And then, the existence of Hayes who was monitoring the situation.

If they were standing by without chasing after Lux, there was a high possibility that they would come to finish off Yoruka and others.

But, in reverse if Yoruka who the enemy was the wariest against showed her figure, they estimated that the enemy would be unable to notice other thing.

—

「My bad but missy Yoruka, can I ask you to attract the attention of Hayes and the others for us? While you are at it I also want you to help the alliance army to retreat. We will take a detour around the enemy’s monitoring and infiltrate into the p; d castle’s chapel in full speed.」

Thus Sharis proposed that they and Yoruka took separate action.

「Can you three accomplish that? There are more than ten Dragon Marauder remnant and several Abyss in the old castle, and if an ambush appeared—」

Yoruka asked with a smile. In respond Sharis looked down with a slight hesitation.

But, she immediately lifted her face resolutely.

「If we can manage somehow—no, we will manage it no matter what! Even if we have to pay with our life, we will recover the Seven Dragon Paladins no matter what. If we cannot say at least that much, there won't be any meaning of us coming here!」

She clenched her shaking fist and the blue haired girl said that. Tillfur and Noct also nodded with serious face.

Airi also took a deep breath and gave a push on their back.

「I also have the same opinion. The seven Ragnarok are revived and surrounded the alliance army. If we don't at least buy time, the alliance army will also be annihilated. Even if we manage to save the Seven Dragon Paladins and fight back, it will be the end if we don't hold out until then.」

「Understood. But, seeing me not going to save Aruji-sama, the enemy will hold doubt that a different force is moving won't they?」

「.....-」

What Yoruka pointed out caused the Triad to hold their tongue.

Certainly, the enemy also knew about Yoruka's character.

If she didn't go straight to save Lux, next they would strengthen their security on the defenseless Seven Dragon Paladins, or perhaps they would even discard and kill them.

「—Then, I will become bait.」

Then, Airi raised her hand quietly.

Noct beside her opened her eyes wide in surprise, but Airi ignored it and expressed her thinking.

「The blood of Arcadia is indispensable for the capture and monopolizing of Avalon. Then, if I expose my figure in the fortress, it will be taken as the reason Yoruka-san is stopping the advance of the Ragnarok. With that the Lords' attention will be fixed on us.」

Excluding Lisha and others the four Divine Drag-Ride users, they would

deliberately expose all the existences that were threat for the enemy.

With that, the Triad for the first time would be able to move with no mark from the enemy putting up their guard against them.

This was also a plan that was possible exactly because it was right now where they had lost almost all of their personnel and had no leeway to assign any of their members for other task.

「But Airi, that's—」

Noct raised an uneasy voice. In respond Airi made a smile to tell her not to worry.

「You cannot stop me here Noct. Everyone will be braving absurdly great danger in the old castle. If I don't do this, then I won't understand for what I come here.」

「I understand. We will take back the Seven Dragon Paladins without fail. Please buy us time until then.」

Sharis clenched her fist with a serious gaze. Everyone there nodded in agreement.

And then, they immediately executed the plan right after that.

Yoruka attracted the attention of the seven Ragnarok, securing the path of retreat for the alliance army while slowing the enemy's invasion at the same time. Using that opening Sharis and others infiltrated the chapel and rescued the Seven Dragon Paladins.

Furthermore using radar, they also succeeded in taking back Seven Dragon Paladins' Sword Devices that were hidden inside the old castle.

Perhaps the fortune had also become their ally, because their operation splendidly worked out.

Right after rescuing the Seven Dragon Paladins, the chapel was destroyed, but when they went around the back, they met up with Lux and Aeril.

Using Bahamut's Divine Raiment, everyone's Wedge was removed and they returned full speed to the fortress.

—And then, now.

「Good grief, as expected I'm also at my limit. The best I can do is to observe the surrounding using radar coverage just in case so the worst case won't happen.」

Yoruka who returned until in front of the fortress muttered that with gasping breath.

Although she had no conspicuous wound, some parts of her armor were cracked. It indicated the intensity of the fierce battle she went through.

She was doing it calmly but, although it was only buying time, facing against seven Ragnarok should be putting a terrifying burden on her.

After all their might was to the degree that the elite alliance army was reduced by half in just ten minutes, so conversely there was no doubt that it was a feat that could only be done by her.

When Airi reconfirmed this greatly unfavorable situation once more, Sharis beside her also nodded.

「This is as far as we go. —We leave the rest to you, Lux-kun.」

「Haaa, I'm knackered now, we also used the new equipment a looot.....」

「Yes. But, it was worth it for us to fray our nerves like that.」]

The Triad who had switched into normal general purpose Drag-Ride watched the battle situation together with Airi in front of the fortress.

The watch tower that was only 300 ml ahead from there was truly the last line of defense.

The fight that would decide the fate of the world was started.

## Part 11

「Hah, do they think they can defeat that huh? Although they had only just woken up and not in their best condition, those things are Ragnarok yeah? There ain't no way a mish-mash gathering of you bastards can hope to match them!」

The one stepping forward in front of the old castle wearing Drake was a silver haired Lord—Hayes.

Niddhogg had been tuned, but if she used that and fought using her full strength, she would die from exhaustion after only twice.

Thus, she was using general purpose Drag-Ride Drake that put little burden on her until now and observed the battle situation.

No instruction came from Listelka in the Heaven Palace.

Mishis was exhausted from destroying the Sacred Eclipse, and Fugil was serving as Listelka's guard.

And then Listelka also had no spare strength from interfering with Avalon's system.

Therefore right now it was only the seven Ragnarok that were the cornerstone of the Lord faction's battle force.

First the swift runner ice wolf Fenrir circled around toward the fortress and breathed out its freezing breath.

「U, AAAAH!?」

「Ku—!」

A part of the alliance army—the elite Drag-Knights were late in escaping.

Alterize who was leading it groaned in distress.

But, a land battle type Drag-Ride stood before her eyes and instantly melted

the freezing.

「—Isn't this pathetic? If you are also someone who originated from Ymir Theocracy, then a coldness of this level should be nothing right?」

「Mel Gizational!」

After Alterize spontaneously yelled so, Mel brushed up her platinum colored hair and smiled.

She directed that mischievous gaze toward the ice wolf and readied the Halberd of Ddraig Gwiber.

「But well, you have run out of luck to encounter me here. My second name is the Subjugator—I cannot let Abyss live.」

「GU, RURURURURURURURUu.....!」

The huge ice wolf raised a ferocious roar and leaped.

The Divine Drag-Ride Ddraig Gwiber that Mel was wearing possessed Divine Raiment of Dual Shift that manipulated heat.

Therefore, her affinity toward Fenrir that was breathing out absolute zero breath was excellent.

Furthermore Ddraig Gwiber possessed transformation function to change from land battle type to flying type.

Changing battle style freely depending on the battle situation was where Mel showed her true worth with her genius sense.

「URURU.....GURYaaAAAAH!」

Fenrir also seemed to sense that simple freezing attack wouldn't work against Mel, it used its huge fangs and claws to attack.

In respond Mel saw that ground battle was disadvantageous and switched her Ddraigh Gwiber to Wyvern Mode.

She glided away with explosive speed and launched a counterattack toward Fenrir's back.

—At the neighboring spot that was 300 ml from there.

There were many remaining ruined buildings with alleys that crisscrossed complicated like a maze.

The Ragnarok of unlimited regeneration which possessed innumerable tentacles—Poseidon, and Rosa Granhide were locked in battle.

Rosa drove her dark grey land battle type Divine Drag-Ride Gorynych. She was backing away while exchanging attack with the enemy.

The countless tentacles growing out from underground would attack consecutively once they captured their target and they would become unmanageable.

Thus, Rosa was weaving her way through the alleys while swinging her Scythe and escaped from the pursuing attacks.

『It's really unfortunate huuuh, Rosa. You won't be able to defeat this guy with the mere strength of a bastard like you y'know?』

A jerr came from Hayes who was watching from far away while wearing a Drake.

But, Rosa kept grinning fearlessly without getting agitated.

Hayes who was once temporarily placed in the post of Heiburg's strategist knew about Rosa's existence.

She knew her as a subordinate of the King of Vices—Calensia who made a deal with her, furthermore she heard from Calensia about Rosa's true nature that was just a coward who was threatened to act as strong person.

『Can't you stop acting like that even after your owner died? Even if you were just forced to act a lie as inhuman character, your sin of assisting with evil deeds ain't gonna disappear. That weak and flimsy heart is impossible to change!』

「.....」

『If you betray that womanizer ruined prince and change side to here once more, I'll at least spare your life y'know?』

Hayes who was limited in the number of times she could fight schemed to

shake Rosa with mental attack so that she would make a mistake in her fight.

Perhaps Hayes's scheme was going well—or perhaps it was Poseidon's strength that was superior, because Rosa was cornered into a dead-end, and countless tentacles finally captured her.

『HYAHAHAHAAH! Looks like you don't even have anything to say back huh! After all without anyone making use of you—without anyone brainwashing you, you cannot even control yourself. You can't even fight properly!』

Hayes's insults were continuously hurled at Rosa.

But, in respond Rosa formed a disappointed smile and only muttered with her eyes looking down.

「—What a pitiful woman eeh. Aren't you yourself unable to do anything if you don't borrow the name and history of the Lord? Are you planning to be like that until you die I wondeeer?」

『What.....!?』

Hayes's voice roughened hearing those words.

「Really what an embarrassment. After getting into the opposite side and looking, for the first time I understand the wretchedness of myself at that time. Averting your eye from reality by simply doing as you are told by someone else, running away into the strength of dream, that appearance is really similar.」

Rosa formed her words dispassionately as though mocking herself.

『Are you bastard planning to confuse yourself with me?』

「As expected no way I'll do that. I don't plan to deny my foolishness in the past but, it's still better than an idiot who cannot get cured even in death seeee. The reason why you are trying to torment every people in this world, everything is just you venting your anger riight?」

『You bastaard—』

「I heard from that girl Soffice. The imperial family the Lord—all of you met treason several hundred years ago, and then you all got knocked off from being the ruler of the world. Your pride that is the foundation of your self was stolen, and so you can't help but hating the people of the world right now, right?」

The constriction of Poseidon's tentacles was tightening with grinding sound, and cracks ran through the armor Rosa was wearing.

It was an absolutely desperate predicament where death was thrust before her eyes.

Even so the girl grinned fearlessly.

「Spare me from being the comrade of you guys for the second time. No matter how much you guys bluff or show off your strength, it's simply that you guys can only express yourself by doing that. There is not a single person who will want to work under such childish people you know?」

『.....Then, you can die like that! Become Poseidon's feed and perish!』

「My baaad but, spare me from that too.」

Rosa answered right away. In that instant, the tentacles crushed the armor.

But, right after that the figure of Rosa herself who was wearing the Drag-Ride vanished, and that armor exploded from inside.

『—!?』

Witnessing that, Hayes noticed.

The Rosa who was captured by tentacles until now was an unmanned Drag-Ride that was Gorynych's special armament, Twelve Vice.

Furthermore it was combined with the special armament Sin Phantom that produced illusion, and it became a decoy that was camouflaged as Rosa herself.

「VAaAaAA.....！」

The countless tentacles that captured the decoy were showered by the armor fragments that were tinged with high heat. Poseidon shrieked.

At the same time, the real Rosa appeared from the shadow of a ruined building.

She swung down her large sized Scythe and buried the blade into the stone paving.

「UUaAA-!?」

「As I thought, so the main body is theree? The regeneration speed is faster the closer the body part is to the main body. To keep hiding underground like this—it's like it's a similar fellow with me eeeh.」

Rosa's smile looked mixed with irony somewhere.

But, she didn't relax her attacking hand.

「Hayes. It's just as you say you knoow, disguise is my specialty. But that isn't for the sake of laying the blame of my crime to this personality or running away anymore.」

『.....』

Rosa touched her Sword Device and further summoned the remaining ten Twelve Vice.

She disassembled them, linked and combined them, and her figure changed in the blink of eye.

Gorynych's Divine Raiment, Tartaros Frame. Its real ability was displayed her.

「Tartaros Frame – Rapid Fire Mode.」

The muzzles of countless weapons like Cannon or Breath Gun were taken into its front surface, forming an atypical appearance.

The Drag-Ride's figure was completely changed into a fortress that was specialized for attack.

「It's to continue carrying the burden for me to keep being me you knoow? Even if it was a part that was created from Callesia's threat, there is no doubt that it is a part of me seee. That's why—」

Heiburg's King of Vices.

The ruler who brainwashed her and created this mask. Now she would use this mask not for that person's sake, but for herself.

She traced the personality of Rosa Granhide, an overbearing and dangerous powerful person.

「Now I'll defeat this thing, for my sake and for Lux-sama.」

## Part 12

「That's, no way—.....why, such thing like this is」

Seven Dragon Paladins, versus seven Ragnarok.

The silver airborne ship floating in the sky above—Heaven Palace. The Lord Listelka Rei Arshalia was overlooking such scene while muttering so.

She scattered Abysses named Shadow to mimic human appearance and agitated the masses, cornering the sovereigns of the countries.

She also made them to bring out the enemy's remaining battle potential, the elite force of all the countries and led them into trap.

Furthermore she took the Seven Dragon Paladins hostage, and planned to brainwash them later to make them into her subordinates.

She used Lux along with Aeril and arranged to make them conquer Avalon.

That scheme splendidly worked and everything went well. Yes—until the middle.

「Why is a mere seven people can face that many Ragnarok? Such thing, was impossible even in our era.」

She wasn't exactly showing agitation, but a doubt was definitely created inside herself.

Even if they were user of Divine Drag-Ride, in the first place Ragnarok wasn't an existence that could be defeated alone.

In reality, even though it was a surprise attack but it was the fact that the alliance's elite Drag-Knights were easily crushed.

「.....」

The maid Mishis who was standing at the side had an idea about the cause of that.

She had only comprehended it through her battle against Celis and Philuffy just now.

「We were making light of them, that's how it is.」

Fugil who was standing by in the same room told that with an admonishing smile.

「No matter how powerful the Ragnarok are, their ability had been completely exposed through the Ruins' capture until now. Furthermore with their weakened state after having just waking up—no」

Fugil paused for a moment and faced Listelka.

「Their true strength is simply superior. It's different from the age where you lived. Although the process is different, they have raised their strength in their own way.」

「Aeril.....if only that girl didn't betray us, the result should be different.」

The ancient era. Listelka who reigned as an absolute ruler seemed to not want to recognize it. She muttered bitterly.

But, Fugil spoke indifferently with an unchanging smile.

「No, you have predicted even her action. The second imperial princess who intended to rebel fell into your trap, and she was perceived as enemy by the world alliance. She already had no other path than to live for the sake of the Lord. The reason, why her fate was overturned—」

「.....Lux Arcadia. Him winning over her highness Aeril to his side is the cause. Is it okay to think like that?」

Mishis said those words, but Fugil silently shook his head.

「That's not it. That foolish little brother didn't know anything like the true identity of her highness princess Aeril. He also didn't try to win him over or anything. In other words—he has the qualities of hero. That guy has the qualities, that can make even someone from the enemy faction to want to become his ally.」

「He.....ro.....?」

Listelka muttered while staring at the scene below which was projected on the metallic wall.

She was dumbfounded and lost her words for a while, then after she shook her head, she silently smiled.

「I won't recognize it. A hero for me is only Fugil. There is no way I can lose against the like of that family of traitor. Then—」

Sitting on the throne, Listelka wore the Crown—the transmission device that was connected to terminal and countless wires.

Even if she tried to interfere with Avalon's system again, she was unable to call a battle strength that surpassed Ragnarok. And she couldn't control only Sacred Eclipse.

In that case—.

『Hayes, please buy time! You can only fight two more times, that's your limit. I will grant you the chance to use one of that here. I too will soon get serious.』

「-.....!? Listelka-sama, you don't mean—!?」

Mishis who heard that changed her facial expression.

The trump card of Avalon that was possible to be used right now.

She had knowledge of that.

「Please stop! If that is used, Sacred Eclipse that was defeated just now might be stimulated. No—other than that, there is also the possibility of the controlled Ragnarok losing their distinction. They might even attack us!」

「Is there, any problem with that?」

「.....」

Listelka made a pure smile. Mishis turned speechless seeing that.

「It's something cheap to pay. We will be able to obtain victory simply by braving a little danger. Compared to that time when we couldn't do anything at all even while being toyed with, this is truly a magnificent hope.」

Her red pupil that received Baptism was shining fiercely as though it was blazing.

What she was doing should also put considerable burden on herself, but she intended to decide the battle right away here.

Mishis immediately turned toward Fugil and threw a pleading gaze at him.

She held hope for him to hold Listelka back in her place, but the man gave a push on his lord's back with a composed smile.

「Just as expected from the pedigree of the empire. My foolish little brother posses a great defect. It's his softness that makes him unable to hand down judgment even while knowing that it is the right thing to do. You possess the resolve to bring down the hammer of judgment, for the sake of your righteousness.」

「Yes. Let me prove it before you. The excellence of my caliber compared to other—」

The moment Listelka responded to Fugil's voice, the body of Listelka who was wearing the Crown that was the terminal faintly shined.

The next moment, Avalon that was sleeping below the ground rumbled, and a single command was released.

—

## Part 13

「GUOH! OGOGOGOOOH.....!?」

「.....What happened? This is—?」

Right after Listelka activated Avalon's system, the greater demon Ragnarok—Iblis that Soffice was fighting suddenly changed.

The Divine Drag-Ride that Soffice was wearing—Vritra possessed the power of Mahapurana that controlled trajectory. With that she dodged the enemy's ability, the light and sound wave of mental pollution, but she was surprised by the change in the enemy.

The muscles along with the wings on the great demon's shoulders until its back bulged, then its jaw opened wide as though it was going to come off.

The eyeballs were enlarged as though it was going to pop out from the eye sockets. Those eyes captured Soffice's movement quickly.

「—VAaaaaAASU!」

「Lies..... The sound just now, don't tell me, it's Lunatic Call!?!」

Soffice was taken aback and gulped. At that instant, a whirlwind was approaching like a surge.

She blocked that powerful arm's horizontal swept with her barrier, but it couldn't be blocked fully.

「Guh, u.....!」

The armor of the left arm that immediately blocked couldn't fully absorb the impact. The armor frame's distorted and creaked.

Soffice took distance using the inertia of her getting blown away, but she didn't even have any time to fix her balance.

She barely parried the battering attack that pursued her with speed that the

eye couldn't follow using her Hammer weapon.

She spontaneously wanted to dodge using trajectory control of Mahapurana, but she couldn't do that.

Iblis didn't switch its method of attack, it only changed all its attack into a single sure-kill attack.

In other words, Iblis's specialty, the sound wave and light ray of mental pollution were also still activated alternately.

「Of all thing, to use Lunatic Call at this phase—」

Soffice who previously used this function as threat from the Ruin Moon understood.

「The final code that is sent through Ruin..... It order the Abysses and Ragnarok at the surrounding to circulate all the energy contained within their core through their whole body, entering a rampage state. Although they will die eventually, they will obtain tremendous power for dozens of minutes—auh!」

There wasn't even any time to ruminate about her past knowledge.

Due to this strengthening she was unable to obtain advantage from using her Divine Raiment, on top of that the difference in performance couldn't be buried.

She should be barely able to fight a Ragnarok alone if it was in a weakened state, but now her opponent was already became stronger even compared to a normal Ragnarok.

『—Hoo, so this high spirited manner of these guys came from that kind of trick?』

「-.....!？」

Soffice put up her guard against the sudden Dragon Voice, but she immediately noticed that the voice came from the captain of Seven Dragon Paladins, Magialca.

She was fighting above the watch tower in front of the fortress, a few hundred ml behind Soffice.

There, terrible hell fire was whirling.

Magialca was facing against the Ragnarok Phoenix.

From the Moon's database, Soffice knew that Phoenix was an extremely bothersome existence that could fire inexhaustible supply of flame arrow in the form of feathers that were filled with special oil, where the flame couldn't be extinguished for a long time.

In contrast Magialca was wearing special type Divine Drag-Ride, Jormungandr.

It had a huge body that gave the impression as though it was a single fortress. It possessed a flaw that it couldn't move from the spot it was placed on once it was deployed.

In exchange, it possessed extraordinary offensive power and defensive power even among Divine Drag-Ride, and then it also possessed seven armored arms that possessed diverse type of armaments. It was a Drag-Ride with limited use, but it possessed a really powerful performance.

However.

『I wish to go as reinforcement but, right now I also have my hands full. Ask other people to help you.』

Soffice immediately said that because she judged that Magialca was obviously in disadvantage.

Jormungandr that was deployed above the watch tower possessed excellent flying ability. From the point of view of Phoenix that could attack one-sidedly from the sky, Magialca was a good target.

But, not all the flame could be blocked and the rooftop of the watch tower was getting burned.

Jormungandr also counterattacked with its armored arms that were loaded with Cannon and Breath Gun, but no matter how abnormally high the weapons' power was, the enemy was a flying type Ragnarok.

The barrage of bullets gave it almost no damage, Cannon attack was dodged, and lethal damage couldn't be inflicted to it.

Before long the watch tower itself was covered with flame. The moment

Magialca dispelled her armor to escape, Phoenix swoop down and reaped her neck in one attack.

Such prediction was instantly drawn in the back of Soffice's mind.

But, even so the voice that replied back to her was tinged with composure.

『It's ten years too early for a brat like you to worry about me. Rather than that be careful. That fellow finally move.』

「—!?」

The moment Soffice raised her face, a single silhouette entered her sight.

There, a Drag-Ride with strange shape that was covered with dark red branches and roots gave off a fierce roar and attacked toward the fortress.

—

## Part 14

「HYAHAAHAHAHAHAAH! My turn finally come yeah! It's time for revenge against you bastards-!」

Hayes raised a shrill voice that was filled with joy and drove her Divine Drag-Ride Niddhogg forward.

The instruction that Listelka gave her.

While Seven Dragon Paladins were locked in battle with the seven Ragnarok, she would use that chance to attack the fortress behind them to exterminate the sovereigns of all the countries. Hayes flew in a straight line through the sky in order to accomplish that order.

The restoration of her flesh body using Baptism for the second time also gave powerful influence to Hayes's fierce mentality. Her aggressive aspect became bared.

Thus she was taking the shortest route.

She drove her Divine Drag-Ride of evil dragon in order to massacre the enemies without even a shred of hesitation or mercy.

The armament with shape of blade stretching out from both end of the handle—Two-Bladed Sword.

The uniquely shaped weapon rotated along with light of Divine Raiment, and slashing line of light stretched out from the tip.

「—Astral Line!」

The sword strike that ignored defense and severed the target along with space itself.

The moment the blade of certain death was unleashed along with an angry yell, that sword strike shifted slightly.

「UAAAaAAH!？」

Several Drag-Knights who retreated into the fortress screamed from the after-effect of the destruction.

But—.

「What are you doing huh, Aneue-sama? Is even your hand went mad alreadyyy, our enemies should be right below us y'know?」

Hayes glared to the front in irritation.

The answer of what shifted the attack just now existed over there.

A Drag-Knight clad in Divine Drag-Ride Zahhak. A girl who possessed hair and eyes with the same color like her—the second imperial princess Aeril.

The whip shaped special armament in her hand coiled around Nidhogg's armored arm and pulled, shifting the attack away.

「.....」

「Hah, so in the end you were seduced by that fake prince into that sorry state huh. You cannot fulfill the duty as Lord and then ended up betraying both sides, just what the hell you are doing? Just die rather than living that disgracefully.」

「I guess. It might be just as you say.」

Aeril wasn't even shaken by Hayes's provocation and smiled with a lonely look.

「I who betrayed the world alliance and tricked other people until now by manipulating their perception don't think that they will be able to recognize me. Even if I saved them in this situation, surely they still won't be able to accept me. I have—turned anything and everything in the world into enemy.」

「And, you are going to fight me because you got desperate? That's a way of living that ain't worthy for a member of the Lord huh!」

Hayes drove her Niddhogg along with a sneer.

She didn't sever the Breath Whip that was coiled around her right arm and deliberately rushed forward like that.

She twirled her Two-Bladed Sword directly horizontal and activated Astral

Line.

「-.....!？」

Originally, once the weapon called whip was entangled to something, it would be difficult to untie it once more with hand movement.

But, Aeril made use of the special armament's ability where it could be controlled until the tip using mind control operation. She barely untied the whip's binding and dodged.

「Then, there ain't any need to go easy huh. Just now a notice came from Listelka-nee-sama y'know. Get rid of the traitor she said!」

Hayes's eyes snapped wide open and she lunged with a thrust of her weapon.

The deathly battle between fellow sisters began.

—

## Part 15

「Coral....., what the hell you are trying to do in that kind of place? Don't tell me, you ain't trying to betray us again right?」

Hayes who assaulted from the sky was stopped by Aeril.

Below that—the Seven Dragon Paladins of Vanheim Principality, Greifer was battling the Ragnarok Metatron.

The huge spherically shaped Ragnarok that possessed absolute defensive ability of attack reflection.

Greifer dodged the heat rays that were fired from its countless eyes while being forced into one-sided defensive battle.

「—lii, liiiiiiiii!」

Originally he should be able to fight against it equally using the compatibility of Cuelebre's Divine Raiment, the absolute invincible state—Photon Dive, but right now due to the Lunatic Call that Listelka activated, the Ragnarok entered a state of rampage and its destructive power was drastically increased.

「.....Chih! Even though it's already tiresome with just this thing, this is out of my league yeah!」

The Seven Dragon Paladins who were rescued by the Triad had their Wedge released by Aeril along with Lux, but because there was no time, they separated with almost no explanation.

Thus Greifer still didn't understand Aeril's true motivation.

Lux said 『She isn't an enemy』 about Aeril, but—

「Chih!」

Greifer clicked his tongue while charging toward Metatron.

He covered himself with Photon Dive while ignoring the enemy's attack

reflection and dealt consecutive attacks on it. That was his strategy.

But, he couldn't break through the defense of the strengthened Ragnarok and he was repelled when the invincibility state ran out of time.

He was lacking in destructive power of one hit certain kill to destroy the hard and also meaty Ragnarok.

「—That's not it. It seems the two Lords above are starting to fight among themselves. As I thought my estimate was correct.」

「What? What do you mean?」

Singlen's voice that came from slight distance away caused Greifer to send a glance there and replied back.

Because of his ability of invincibility using the Divine Raiment Photon Dive, he somehow had the leeway to talk while he was focusing in defense.

On the other hand, Singlen was battling against a rampaging Ragnarok—Deus ex Machina with him at advantage, but as expected, because the enemy possessed the ability to teleport object through space, it looked like he was unable to deal the finishing blow.

「I mean that ruined prince, he succeeded in cajoling the second imperial princess. I was unable to win over that man, but in the end this is the ideal flow. After all I planned to have that guy to act as [hero] anyway.」

Singlen who was clad with deep blue Drag-Ride—Leviathan grinned fearlessly while sending slashing attack using water current.

「You mean—for making government system by Drag-Knight that you told us in the past? That's being too much of a poor loser ain't it? It's strange even if you say that in this kind of time.」

Because Metatron was temporarily taking distance at that timing, Greifer pointed that out.

In the past Singlen talked about managing the scramble for technologies and legacies from Ruins by replacing the government of each country with new ruling structure by Drag-Knight.

In the end everyone there didn't understand whether Singlen was really

serious or not.

But, there was no doubt that Singlen saw through that Lux would play an important role in the fight ahead and he persistently tried to make Lux enter under his command.

(.....But, in the end vice captain-sama's true objective is still unclear.)

Greifer faced Metatron once more with a dubious face.

There was no more leeway to have his attention diverted by Singlen.

He barely defended against the heat rays that were fired consecutively from the eyeballs and aimed for a ray of hope to recover from this hopeless situation.

「You will understand soon. Why did I set him up as hero, and what will happen at the end of it. Well, that's only if you can survive until then though.」

「Hah! That's one awful encouragement there. Then—just watch me.」

Greifer's Cuelebre that didn't possess focused attack power to break through one point only had one method to defeat that Ragnarok. It would be a dangerous bet that could also be taken as suicidal resolve, but there was no prospect of victory other than that.

「Reckless challenge is my principle yeah, vice captain-sama. Don't expect me to die with just a pinch of this level.」

Coral was at his side as the aide of Vanheim Principality's Seven Dragon Paladins.

Right now he put aside even his emotion toward her—the second imperial princess Aeril of the Lord.

「It's really simple. Just who is gonna die while letting you bastards do as you please to us huh. That's why, don't you dare die, Coral.」

Greifer spoke over his shoulder with a careless tone and then he faced the Ragnarok once more.

He leaped once more into the storm of heat rays.

## Part 16

「GU, ooOOOOOoooOOOOO-!」

「—Kuh.....! Haa, haa.....-」

Lux was breathing hard against the attack of branches and roots that were coming one after another.

The Ragnarok that Lux faced was the gigantic Ragnarok Yggdrasil.

Its special ability was—adaptation strengthening.

It would obtain resistance against the enemy's attack, furthermore it would grow and evolve to surpass the enemy's strength.

It was an opponent that he had fought and defeated before, but as expected it was extremely troublesome.

It wasn't like before when Hayes fed the Yggdrasil with several hundred Abysses, but the Lunatic Call by Listelka made it entered a rampage state and it cornered Lux into a situation that he couldn't deal with.

Quick Draw, Recoil Burst, End Action.

He had already used the three hidden techniques, but he couldn't obtain a breakthrough.

There was also the option of using the hidden technique that made use of tuning—Singlen's Senjin, but using that might make the enemy took advantage of it instead within this battlefield where so many branches were flying around everywhere.

Above all else, the fatigue from the continuous serial battles until now took away the thinking ability from Lux's mind.

But, he couldn't throw in the towel just from this much.

Aeril had thrown away her place to belong as a Lord, furthermore she also

knew that there was a high possibility that she wouldn't be able to be accepted within the world alliance anymore. But even then she cooperated with Lux and others.

In addition for the sake of everyone from Syvalles too, who gave their all in order to save him, he must not lose here no matter what.

With the revival of Yggdrasil, a bad influence might occur within Philuffy once more.

And above all else, inside the fortress behind him there were the retreating soldiers and Airi.

And then, suddenly at the corner of Lux's sight—he caught sight of a ship floating in the clear azure sky.

The silver airborne ship that was called as Heaven Palace, the castle of the Lords.

(Are you over there, Fugil?)

Aeril said that as a Lord, she would fight for the sake of her own belief.

What about Lux?

Defeating the revived Ragnarok here, captured Avalon, and stopped Sacred Eclipse.

Certainly the world might be saved with that, but was Lux's wish only that?

He became involved with the new kingdom once more as a Seven Dragon Paladins, and he joined the side that protected the new order.

He obtained comrades and backer who he could trust, and got stronger.

Was he satisfied with his current self? No—wrong.

—

『It's meaningless you know, Lux. Someone who has no resolve to exercise evil by their own will, someone who cannot sacrifice anyone, no matter how much such person grow stronger it won't have any meaning at all. You are the weakest.』

—

The cold gaze of the elder brother looking down on the collapsed Lux in front of the throne of the old empire's castle that was submerged in a sea of blood.

The sight of that day where all the people in the side of the old empire were massacred were seared into his mind even now.

The Lords who tried to rule the world.

However Aeril tried to save Lux and other by risking her life.

「Then—, I'm not mistaken!」

No matter what kind of danger he who had to braved through, he wanted to save Aeril who once was in the enemy side.

When he resolved himself like that and looked up above, Lux sent a Dragon Voice to her about a certain strategy at the same time.

—

## Part 17

「Is that it Aneue-sama!? Don't make us even more disappointed than this yeaah!」

At above while Lux was being cornered by Yggdrasil.

A deathly battle of Hayes who was wearing Niddhogg versus Aeril with her Zahhak was continuing.

Niddhogg's Divine Raiment, Astral Line that was emitted from the special armament Two-Bladed Sword was an ability that cut apart in wide range along with space itself.

The cut section that was created by the Divine Raiment became blocked along with space, becoming a boundary that was impossible to be interfered with.

It became a wall that blocked the opponent's attack, at the same time it reduced the opponent's space to move and became a way to corner them.

Furthermore, in order to prevent Hayes from attacking the Seven Dragon Paladins, Aeril couldn't undo the Breath Whip that she had entangled around her opponent's armored arm once more.

One of her weapons was sealed and she was forced into disadvantage.

Even though Aeril was desperately wielding a Blade with her free left hand, all her attacks were blocked due to dark red branches growing from Hayes's armor.

「—, you are planting Yggdrasil's seed into your armor? You won't last long if you fight in that state you know!?」

「If you are going to make a threat than make it something more effective. Or else is that you begging to be overlooked Aneue-sama? You are really unsightly huh! It will be just my satisfaction if I die for the sake of the Lord!」

「.....Uah!」

From the armor that was transformed into B-blood Nidhogg due to Yggdrasil's parasite, a branch spear thrust out.

The Blade of Aeril that received direct attack of it was broken and furthermore the branch coiled around her and constricted.

「You yourself, do you have any leeway to split your strength with unnecessary things huh? Seems like you are using your Divine Raiment since some time ago to cover up that sham prince but, that's naïve! Where is that bastard, where are you hiding him!?」

「Kuh, AAAAAAAA.....-!？」

Aeril raised an anguished scream. At the same time, below at the ruin where Hayes was looking down at, Lux's figure appeared.

In order to protect Lux who was fighting below, Aeril used Zahhak's Divine Raiment, the Brain Hack to erase Lux's very existence from Hayes's memory.

And then, just now the effect was dispelled.

「Ku-ku-ku. That's a good look you have there? Are you at your limit already? A woman who got led astray by that worthless fake prince really is a pathetic thing huuh.」

「.....」

In respond Aril only kept grimacing in pain and didn't say anything.

Aeril's surrounding was already surrounded by cut sections in space that were created by Hayes's Astral Line. She was in a situation where she couldn't move.

「You ran out of look when you fell in love with that kind of trash. But Aneue-sama is saying that she will hand down a lenient punishment y'know. Listen to this.」

Hayes laughed and pointed the tip of her sword to Aeril who was captured by Yggdrasil's branches and got bound hand and foot.

Then, Listelka's voice that was broadcasted from the heaven palace showered down on the area where Hayes and Aeril were at.

『Aeril..... You are already satisfied right? I understand your feeling. The bunch inside that fortress is a different matter but, I won't rule over them one-sidedly. That's why won't you stop your defiance already and return to our side?』

It was a graceful and yet warm voice.

Listelka whispered sweet words that were oozing with kindness into her little sister's ear.

『You came into contact with the people of this world and then understood their feeling. If that's the case, then I want to respect your stance as much as possible. Or perhaps, are you unable to believe me, your blood-related elder sister?』

Listelka's timely help that was trying to win over Aeril at this point.

The Seven Dragon Paladins were forced into disadvantage and Aeril herself also had no place to belong remaining for her.

『What use is there in continuing to fight when no one will recognize you for it? There is still a path remaining for you as Lord. If you return to our side now, then I will be generous and promise to specially save Lux Arcadia alone.』

「.....」

Next Listelka showed the greatest concession she could make.

Hayes reflexively showed a displeased voice and a bit of silence was born.

「A path as a Lord—is it?」

Aeril let out a voice that was mixed with a sigh while her body was still constricted along with her armor.

She gave off an atmosphere that was vaguely resigned and stared at the Heaven Palace floating in the sky.

「.....-」

Lux who was in the middle of battle was listening to that exchange, but he didn't say anything.

He thought that Listelka's invitation was a trap, but he had no way to prove

that.

Just a few seconds—.

After an indecision that was equal to a few minutes within Lux's bodily sensation, Aeril lifted her face and opened her mouth.

An absolutely desperate situation where her limbs were restrained and there was no place to escape.

On such a situation, a pardon where only her and Lux would be saved was offered, but Aeril silently shook her head.

「You're wrong, Nee-san, Hayes. In the first place such path is mistaken.」

Aeril was staring at empty air with an expression that looked lonely and pained.

「Why did us Lord declined? Why were we betrayed and sealed by the family of traitor? You two should understand why. That was because we tried to rule the world using Key's Supervisor's technological strength and the Ruins' power. Because we forcefully oppressed all the people.」

「.....Hah! Just when I thought what you are going to say, what is so bad about that? A family with power and excellence controlling the other with that is only natural!」

In front of her Hayes bared a wicked look and yelled enthusiastically.

But, Aeril's empty smile didn't crumble.

「Yes, everything thought that it's only natural. Because we are superior, because we are the chosen clan, anything we do to other people is fine. That arrogance ruined us. I understand. That day, before we slept for a few hundred years, I averted my eyes while noticing that.」

『.....This is really troubling, Aeril. For you to lose the nobility of your soul while making friends with those lowly bunch—』

「Nee-san and Hayes yourself doesn't understand anything. The Lord and the Ruins are already unnecessary in this era. That's why I'll destroy Avalon along with Sacred Eclipse, and seal all the Ruins. That is my wish.」

『Do you think you can accomplish that? I won't allow you to say that you do not know how greedy of a creature human is you know?』

Listelka sighed in exasperation.

But, Aeril smiled widely and looked at Lux.

『Of course I know. But I am not mistaken at all. We can understand each other with the people of this world. No—』

Aeril took a deep breath and glared straight to the Heaven Palace.

『No matter what kind of hardships we have to shoulder, we have to do that. That's why, I'll fight!』

『.....』

Aeril declared her intention resolutely.

Listelka who saw that could be heard gasping.

『Is that so, I too still have some way to go.』

It was a gentle voice that for a moment made it sounded like she was recognizing Aeril's opinion.

However right after that, the place was filled with dark voice that was filled with deathly dose of lethal poison.

『As the leader of the Lord, pardoning a failed existence like you is—』

『.....-!?』

『Looks like that's how it is yeah, Onee-sama. I won't be able to hold on until the unveiling of Avalon but, die here! Farewell!』

Hayes raised her fervor and held up Niddhogg's Two-Bladed Sword.

Zahhak's Breath Whip that was entangled around its armored arm was already severed. Aeril's movement was sealed from four directions by walls of cut section in space.

Aeril was in absolute danger, however she smiled with refinement.

『—I've been waiting you know, Hayes, for those words and attack.』

『What?』

The slash of Astral Line that possessed absolute offensive power.

Aeril should be unable to make any movement with the partition of severed space surrounding her, but she penetrated one cut section and slipped out.

Right after that—the slash that Hayes unleashed split an empty ground into two.

「.....Impossible-!? How did you pass the wall of severed space!？」

The cut section of space that was created by Astral Line would automatically vanish starting from the oldest cut when the number of the cut exceeded a certain number, but it should be impossible to break through them with any other way.

It would be different if Divine Raiment neutralization effect like Philuffy's Typhon was used, but there wasn't any sign of anything like that occurring.

「You were careless, Hayes. I dispelled Zahhak's Divine Raiment wasn't because I had no more strength to spare to cover for Lux-kun. It was because I changed what memory I stole from you. I used Brain Hack to make you forget that you had used Astral Line and one of the cut sections surrounding me had vanished—」

「Wha.....！」

Hayes who was told the answer also noticed.

The space at the four directions from Aeril was vertically and horizontally cut into a situation where it seemed like she was locked, but that was an illusion.

In reality Aeril wasn't passing through a cut section.

The memory of the vanished cut section was erased from Hayes's eyes and she didn't notice the hole.

「It was Lux-kun who taught me this plan. While he is in the middle of battle with Yggdrasil where he cannot relax even for an instant, he still gave me guidance in order to save me.」

「.....-! So what! In the first place you bastard have no more weapon remaining! You've got no way to win against the B-blood Nidhogg of this great mee!」

Along with her angry scream, Hayes's head armor part shined and a powerful shockwave whirled.

「—Howling Roar!」

At that time when she was about to unleash a shockwave with maximum output, the branches of Yggdrasil that were strengthening Hayes's armor slackened and simultaneously came untied.

「WHaa-!?」

Although the main frame of Niddhogg itself didn't collapse, its strengthened power was drastically weakened.

Aeril who saw that swung her half destroyed Breath Whip and entangled it around Hayes and restrained her.

「You didn't notice? After I made you forgot about the cut section in space using Brain Hack, next I erased different thing from your memory. That is—」

「GU, GYAAAAAAaaaAAAAAH.....!」

Hayes whose attention was attracted turned her bloodshot eyes to below, where she caught the sight of Yggdrasil that was split almost in half while letting out a weird shriek.

「Lux-kun lured it there. When you whose memory of Yggdrasil was stolen let out your slash, it was guided to a position where it was easy to get hit.」

「Impossible-! E, even such thing.....!?」

Currently Lux had no strength to defeat the revived Yggdrasil that entered rampage state.

But, it didn't matter that it was a living thing that could strengthen itself infinitely, it would be helpless against a slash that cut its core along with the space.

Therefore—Lux formed a plan from the Divine Raiment of Aeril's Zahhak and their position, and turned the predicament into a good chance.

「And then Hayes. Even the me right now have no strength to deal a finishing blow to you. That's why, I'll ask him to do it for me. After all just now I have also

lend him my strength to exterminate Yggdrasil.]

「—Right. Leave it to me, Aeril.]

In front of Yggdrasil whose core was destroyed and raised a shriek of death agony, Lux put his breathing in order and took his stance.

Aeril's Zahhak swooped down with her Breath Whip was still restraining Hayes, pulling her.

The moment Hayes came before Lux's eyes with a momentum as though she was going to crash on the ground, Lux activated his Divine Raiment.

「—Reload on Fire】

In a timing where Hayes in her Drag-Ride and Yggdrasil were side by side, Lux's Divine Raiment activated in the radius of ten-odd meter around him.

Due to the compression strengthening of time, the time was lengthened without end.

Amidst that time, slashes that were like heavy rain struck toward the two.

—

## Part 18

Mel who possessed the nickname of Subjugator were in deathly combat against the giant ice wolf Ragnarok Fenrir.

While the fight of Lux and Aeril was reaching the climax, this side was also about to reach the conclusion.

「UooOOOoOOON.....!」

The ice wolf Fenrir that was turned brutal due to the Lunatic Call was changing form by cladding its whole body with armor of ice using its overwhelming freezing ability.

Mel was unable to dodge all of Fenrir's high speed consecutive attacks using ice blade. The Ddraig Gwiber she was wearing had countless scratches on it.

「How troublesome. The enemy can create armor and weapon infinitely. If the current me continue to melt all of the enemy's ice, my stamina won't hold.」

The temperature at the surrounding became below the freezing point and even the air she exhaled froze.

If Mel's Drag-Ride wasn't Ddraig Gwiber that controlled temperature, she might had been killed since a long time ago.

(Besides, this variable mode that can change into Wyvern Mode is also fortunate.)

If she fought in the mode of land battle type, most likely her foothold would be frozen and she would be unable to move properly.

Thinking how she was able to avoid the worst case, even Mel had some advantage.

「UGARURURURUAH!」

She also had her hand full to defend against the attack of front leg and fang

that Fenrir unleashed from his state that was covered with ice armor.

The strengthening to its offense and defense was extremely troublesome. It couldn't be broken through with the attack of Mel's Halberd.

Ddraig Gwiber's special armament, the creation bullet—Grand Buster boasted the greatest offensive power, even so it could only gouge the ice wolf's flesh with one attack at best.

The Grand Buster originally possessed explosive might that could change even the terrain, but it couldn't be fired consecutively, and on top of that it was also completely defended against by the enemy's ice armor.

「It's really troublesome. Far more than when I fought it before—but」

After taking a breath, Mel made a fearless smile.

「Compared to the troublesomeness of that Krulcifer, this is nothing at all. It cannot form a tactic that is too advanced. You are—」

「URURU.....UGAAAaAAAH!？」

The ice wolf reacted to Mel's words that sounded like she was making fool of it and leaped in enrageinent.

But, the moment it crouched its body deeply to leap, the ground crumbled and Fenrir's body sunk into the ground.

「You didn't notice? If the water underground is solidified beforehand to make ice, and then it is vaporized, a space will be created—it was a hard work to make a pitfall that is big enough for you though.」

Mel exposed the trick while using Dual Shift's temperature manipulation to make an ice lid above the hole where Fenrir fell.

Fenrir itself possessed terrific freezing ability, but conversely it couldn't melt ice.

But, even so with the overwhelming physical ability that Ragnarok possessed, Fenrir tried to smash through the ice forcefully.

「URURUHGUAAAAH.....！」

- Crack crack\* The ice lid was cracked and in the blink of eye its head

peeked out.

But, at that time Mel was already finished with the firing preparation of Ground Buster from above the hole where Fenrir was trapped.

「I'll give you a special lesson. You already lose you know? When I saw a chance, I would bury frozen bullet of Ground Buster into that pitfall. There are ten of them inside. In other words—」

If she fired even one Ground Buster and detonated it, the impact would induce all the other frozen bullets to explode. A power that was ten times the original would strike in one go.

「—GU, UooOoOOoAaaaa.....!」

Right after Mel fired the last bullet, flame blast and shockwave smashed apart the ruins along with the terrain with the pitfall at the center.

The ice armor Fenrir was wearing was easily broken, and its thick fur and flesh were pierced through.

「A, GA, A.....!」

Even with its cracked core was exposed, Fenrir still tried to crawl up, but its flesh was already ruined.

「That's really something. To be able to stand up even after receiving that much attack.」

Mel was also breathing hard, even so she spoke with a confident gaze.

「But—can you accept it I wonder? Human who fight while thinking is the strongest, legendary monster-san.」

The girl who surpassed even the strengthened Ragnarok in this short time muttered.

She felt it keenly how she became stronger by a level more as the youngest Drag-Knight while thinking that this time for sure she wanted to try to win against even Krulcifer.

She took out her Cannon and aimed it below with that flood of emotion filling herself.



## Part 19

At the neighboring position that was three hundred ml further from there.

The battle between Vanheim Principality's Seven Dragon Paladins, Greifer versus the gigantic spherically shaped Ragnarok Metatron would also be concluded.

「What a persistent guy, this shitty eyeball.」

Ragnarok Metatron's attack method was only laser beam from its eyes.

And then other than that peculiar attack reflection ability, it could only move sluggishly using its wings.

But, with how simple it was, he couldn't find the method to subdue it.

Greifer had already known how Lux used Reload on Fire to prolong the timing when it reflected attack that was even less than an instant, and destroyed it in that opening.

But, in order to do that, one had to produce a strength that could reach until it core in one attack during that blank instant when it reflected attack back.

Tail Blade moved with its blade having partition that was shaped like snake stomach. It was a special armament that could expanded and contracted, and drew a trajectory that was like a whip, but the weakness of its ever changing trajectory was its low power.

It was completely impossible for it to cut apart the flesh of Ragnarok whose even life force was strengthened and then destroyed the core.

「I'll fucking do it. I'm gonna push through this impossibly hard challenge!」

Greifer grinned in disgruntlement while parrying Metatron's laser.

If he used the Divine Raiment of invincibility, Photon Dive, dodging would be easy, but he limited his use of it so that the enemy wouldn't get used to it.

Because of that, several dozen lasers pierced his barrier, and the solid armor of Cuelebre was being shaved and melted.

Greifer's own body also received the after wave of the laser and he was injured with throbbing scalds here and there.

It was a lonely fight with him alone.

The grey buildings of abandoned capital Guernica made Greifer recalled the town where he was born and raised.

While he was born as a son of a military officer, his father was dishonored and his family fell into ruin.

He was wandering around the back alley since his childhood and spent days of living like a stray dog.

It was also as though he had no aptitude as Drag-Knight. His path to become a military officer of the next generation was also closed.

Even so he resisted, didn't give up, and tackled his training with foolish straightforwardness.

He accidentally snatched an old Drag-Ride from a bandit, and he continued to ride it until he vomited blood.

One night, a strange girl appeared in front of him, and since then he became able to use the Drag-Ride well.

His effort caught the eyes of Princess Milmiette and she picked him up, and he regained the path as knight once more.

「—This is damn irritating. This attitude of those Lord bunches thinking that we ain't gonna win if they throw something like this at us.」

Greifer was unconcerned whether he was belittled or despised.

But, he couldn't endure being made light of.

Challenging one's own harsh fate, surviving even if one had to get hurt and struggle was the instinct of living thing.

Thus Greifer was called as the Covetous Wolf who challenged and overcame every kind of impossibility, and his surrounding held him in awe and fear.

The only thing that bothered him who was uncaring about the past matter was Lux's existence.

He was a son of the old empire's emperor who became the cause of Greifer's father losing his standing, but such bond from that fateful connection between them had completely vanished.

It was because the impression Lux gave was the farthest from the imperial family of the old empire, and above all else it was because Greifer noticed that it wasn't just himself who was resisting adversity that was called as impossible.

「Then, I also cannot lose huh.」

His eyes glinted fiercely and Greifer glared at Metatron.

He was in a situation where he was surrounded by buildings in four directions and he had no place to escape. Metatron descended from above and its huge eye opened to shower down laser on him.

「Planning to corner me? Actually, you know! It's the reverse!」

Greifer lifted the corner of his lips and grinned, then rushed above.

He spun his body into spiral and stabbed up his Tail Blade.

At the same time, he dodged the laser attack of the enemy while thrusting his blade that was tinged with energy toward that eyeball.

「—iiIIlll」

Metatron absorbed the power of that attack and reflected it back by several times more.

However in that instant, Greifer also activated Cuelebre's Divine Raiment.

「I've been waiting for that yeah—Photon Dive!」

The Divine Raiment turned the user invincible and repelled every kind of attack, but the direction the attack was repelled toward was different from usual.

The light membrane of defense blew upward to right above—, so to say, the power of Greifer's attack that had been strengthened by several times was pushed back as it was to Metatron.

Therefore, it pierced at the instant it was defenseless while doing its attack reflection.

The precise flash that was like passing through the eye of a needle reached the core, and Metatron raised a shrill scream.

Liquid that was like blood spurted out from the wound opening, and its body began to crumble into pieces.

「Focusing to one point, and then one attack huh. I've indeed learned the lesson yeah.」

The most terrifying strong point of Greifer was how he struggled through any kind of deathly situation and returned alive.

And then how he became stronger every time he stood back on the battlefield again.

He would survive even if he was defeated, and then he would get back up again even stronger than before.

When he was made to taste defeat by Krulcifer, he also grasped the technique of precise shooting from that time, and in this occasion he splendidly displayed his use of it to defeat his opponent.

—

## Part 20

Furthermore, at the watch tower in front of the fortress where Magialca was fighting.

A few hundred ml in front of it, two battles were progressing side by side.

At the right side was Heiburg Republic's Rosa Granhide.

Holding out at the left was Turkimes Confederation's Soffice Xfer.

It was less than a few minutes, but against the strengthened and rampaging Ragnarok as the opponent, they were performing a deathly battle where they couldn't lose focus for even an instant.

Although Soffice defended against the brainwashing through sound wave and light from Iblis using her Divine Raiment of trajectory control, she was unable in pure exchange of blow using strength. Soffice was caught in a disadvantageous one-sided defensive battle.

「.....This is really an irony. A Key's Supervisor who originally has the position to manage Ragnarok now meet this kind of experience—ua!」

Soffice was grumbling expressionlessly even while breathing hard. In front of her Iblis was approaching and struck with its powerful arm.

She barely offset the attack's power by leaping behind, even so the frame of Vritra that she was wearing got warped from the impact.

「If you have the leeway to grumble than use it to fight. This side is also unmanageable you knoow」

On the other hand Rosa too was having difficulty with Poseidon after its rampage despite being in advantage at the beginning of the fight.

Poseidon increased its tentacles even more using its life force of infinite regeneration, dragging on the fight endlessly.

Even if it was hit with concentrated bombardment like before, it would regenerate even while getting hit.

There was only one way remaining to defeat it for Rosa, but he was lacking the piece to make it reality.

No matter how much she used the unmanned Drag-Rides Twelve Vice as decoy and confused Poseidon, the countless tentacles would constrict them all simultaneously.

「I wonder if my estimation was a bit too optimistic.....」

The unmanned Drag-Rides were entangled and crushed by tentacles one after another. She was getting cornered step by step.

「It has been a long time eeh, since I taste this feeling.」

Rosa was sweating while smiling in this situation of absolute desperation.

『Don't show any weakness, especially when you find yourself in a predicament.』

Callesia, the King of Vice who ruled over her taught Rosa like that.

If one believed that they were unrivalled and put on a mask of a powerful person, they wouldn't be scared of anything.

Accepting the rule of someone as absolute and filling one's empty shell with it was truly comfortable.

It was also—truly terrifying.

Not having a thinking of their own, but simply acting the villain role that was prepared for them.

For Rosa who had experienced unhappiness until now, it was a salvation, but at the same time all the sin was placed on her and she was treated as a tail that could be severed anytime.

(But that person, broke my shell for me.)

Lux didn't try to rule or control her, he simply let her alive.

He was trying to look at her other than the mask of villain that she was donning.

In that case right now her duty was to repay her debt to him. When she thought like that and tried to raise her spirit, a voice came from behind.

「I heard about your story from Magialca. It looks like you are the same like me, you were also saved by Lux. That means, we are in fact friends—perhaps?」

Standing behind with her back facing Rosa was Soffice Xfer wearing Divine Drag-Ride Vritra.

She was facing Ragnarok Iblis while approaching until a distance of a few dozen ml apart from Rosa.

「You are really leisurely if you still can invite me for a chat aren't you? I'll put it into consideration so can we postpone it for later I wondeer.」

Rosa replied like that with a tight tone.

Soffice was fundamentally expressionless so it was unknown what she was thinking, but Rosa thought that she was a really strange woman.

「We will be defeated at this rate. Don't you think it's unsightly if we lose here?」

「.....」

Rosa tried to turn away Soffice with her usual thorny attitude, but she was taken aback and gasped hearing Soffice's serious voice.

「We too are fellow people who were done in by Lux, we should look back and—.....-!？」

In the middle of conversation, Soffice was enveloped in the hell fire that Iblis blew out and she leaped back.

Her armor's endurance and her body's exhaustion already didn't allow her any time to talk leisurely.

Rosa didn't have any wish to believe in other person, but right now the situation didn't allow that.

After all she was at least able to understand that feeling of losing to Lux's persuasion and returned back to Seven Dragon Paladins.

「And, what are you planning? I also have no time over here you knoow.」

「I know the power of your Divine Drag-Ride. If your firepower is lacking, it will be fine if we just increase it until the limit. I already gathered the materials for that.」

「——」

Rosa looked around her surrounding in respond to Soffice's words.

The surrounding was full with certain things that should be scattered about, buried with the rubbles of smashed buildings and stone paving.

In a glance, those were just things that were nothing but trash, but for Rosa it was different.

Until now she overlooked them because the tentacles of Poseidon were cornering her, but certainly the requirements for victory had been gathered under her.

No, most likely Soffice was fighting while readying the preliminary arrangements.

「I will buy you the time until then. That's why, I ask you to hurry.」

「.....Hah, okaaay. We too have to show off our good side here after aaall.」

Seeing that, Rosa's lips slackened and she nodded naturally.

Then Soffice drew out her Sword Device from its sheath and lifted it up while raising her voice.

「—Full Connect – On.」

Vritra that she was wearing flashed intensely and vibrated.

The armor was disassembled and miniscule machines combined with her flesh body, assimilating into it.

Silver lines were drawn on Soffice's brown skin, and her eyes were shining.

「VAaAaaA.....！」

Right after that, Poseidon's tentacles crawled out from the ground along with a roar that shook the ground.

「—Mahapurana！」

But, Soffice activated Vritra's Divine Raiment at the same time in that instant.

The tentacles' movement was manipulated by the trajectory control, and they were made to entangle the body of great demon Iblis that was nearby.

「VAaaaaAASUH!」

Iblis whose movement was sealed and constricted stopped moving and struggled.

Originally she used her trajectory control to block the sound wave and light ray of mental pollution. Because of that she had to move to dodge other attacks, but—.

「As I thought.....just as predicted. Even Iblis's mental pollution will weaken while it is being attacked. Next is—」



Soffice was relieved like that was only for a brief moment. The tentacles of Poseidon that were restricting Iblis were torn apart by Iblis's strength.

「Perhaps, that was being too optimistic.....」

Soffice sweated from her forehead and tried to retreat, it was then the torn apart tentacles were instantly connected to become like before.

「—!?」

The regeneration ability that surpassed the imagination caused Soffice's eyes to widen. At that time Iblis roared.

The mysterious sound wave of mental pollution. In order to prevent it from influencing Rosa, she used trajectory control to divert that oscillation, but in exchange Soffice was entangled by Poseidon's tentacles and then she received Iblis's ferocious blow from above.

「Ga, hah.....!?」

The barrier in maximum output was pierced and fist that was unleashed from a powerful arm was rained down from across the tentacles.

Because she was assimilated into Vritra using Full Connect, the impact was transmitted from the armor until it reached her bones.

The strength was too fierce, her consciousness was getting farther every time she received an impact.

(This is bad.....at this rate I'll die. I won't hold for even ten more seconds.)

Her armor was squashed, and Soffice's expression distorted in pain.

But, at that time a giant shadow suddenly grasped Iblis's whole body from behind.

「VAaaASU!?」

The demon that boasted a body size that surpassed several houses combined was put in an eagle grip by an extremely gigantic armored arm.

The whirling dust was cleared and a figure appeared. It was Rosa Granhide who was clad in Gorynch that had transformed into a super gigantic size.

「Tartaros Frame – Devil Machia Mode. Good work buying timeee.」

「Haa, haa.....」

Soffice was gasping and was unable to even nod back.

But, that figure that came from gathering more than a hundred Drag-Ride and combined them into one using the shape change of Tartaros Frame, boasted enough majesty to make Soffice felt relieved.

「Va!? AaAA.....?」

The two Ragnarok that witnessed a figure that surpassed even their large body stiffened for a moment in agitation.

In contrast, Rosa grinned fearlessly and constricted Iblis tightly with her armored arm, breaking both its arms.

「Are you two wondering? It's really simple you know. This girl was just gathering the parts when she had the chance. Several hundred Drag-Rides of world alliance that got crushed by you monsters—she gathered about half of those wreckages, that's why it's amazing.」

「Gu, goh.....GAaAAAaAAA-!」

Rosa moved the armored arm and then crushed Iblis within its grip.

Even a Ragnarok in rampage state was helpless when it was caught by a giant Drag-Ride that was made from the combination of more than a hundred Drag-Rides.

Its core was pressured and broke, and then the body disintegrated like an old rag.

That body quickly crumbled into ash.

「aAaAAH.....!」

Even so, the remaining Ragnarok, Poseidon sent its tentacle to entangle the armored leg of Gorynych.

It aimed at the joint part of the combined armor to constrict it but—the squid shaped body of Poseidon that was hiding underground rose to the surface, and that torso was exposed in front of Rosa.

「AaaA!?」

「A comrade is something good isn't it? I can also understand the strength of Lux-sama who is able to make so many comrades.」

「.....Rather than something like that, shoot quickly. I'm also at my limit.」

Soffice squeezed out her last strength and with Vritra's Divine Raiment, the trajectory control she dragged out the enemy.

Right after that torso where the core was sleeping got exposed, Gorynych in Devil Machia Mode unleashed all its gunports.

「U, AaAAAAAAaAaaaAaaaAAAaAaAa—!?」

It was a concentrated bombardment from dozens of Cannons that were integrated into the armor's chest.

Poseidon raised a shriek of death agony and its core was burned down.

Right after accomplishing that, the armor Rosa was wearing was dispelled, and her body was sweating like waterfall.

She was breathing hard with heaving shoulders, and she stood still for a while with opened mouth.

It was as though she couldn't make any movement, but it was lucky that she didn't collapse and her Drag-Ride dispelled.

Creating a combination of more than a hundred Drag-Rides and then controlling it was just that exhausting.

「—Somehow, we win.」

「Yes, I owe you one theree.」

In the past Soffice challenged a lonely battle as a Key's Supervisor, while Rosa was simply Callesia's puppet.

The two who didn't understand about cooperating with someone else could combine their strength in this critical moment was thanks to their common circumstance of having been saved once by Lux.

「You, I don't understand what you are thinking from your outside look but, you are unexpectedly capable huuuh.」

「You too, somehow your character is different but, you are quite strong.」

At that time when Rosa and Soffice were looking at each other's face, an earth tremor could be heard from nearby.

「—!? That's, Singlen and Deus ex Machina」

Just as Soffice said, a mechanical large body was dancing in their sight.

Singlen was a preeminently powerful person with his blue Divine Drag-Ride Leviathan and his battle technique that put Drag-Ride tuning into practical use—<sup>Battle Array</sup> Senjin, but even he was at disadvantage against Ragnarok as his opponent.

Besides, the enemy Ragnarok was equipped with absolute offense and evasion ability due to its grasp of space, and its high defensive ability with its body that was created from thick Mythrildite.

Furthermore, Deus ex Machina now was even stronger than when Lux and Soffice fought it due to its rampage state.

Even Singlen couldn't avoid a hard fight against it.

At present Singlen was only dodging the enemy's attack and didn't move to attack at all.

「Even that kind of haughty and fiendish man is still our vice captain, it will be bad if we don't help him.」

「I guesss....., at least if I can just breath easily—」

The instant Soffice and Rosa muttered that, abnormality occurred in Deus ex Machina that was unleashing consecutive attacks until now.

「.....GI, iOoOooo!」

There was a dull sound of metal getting squashed. Along with it Deus ex Machina's movement became terribly sluggish.

Looking very carefully, there was an absurd amount of vapor rising up from that large metallic body.

「That's what in the world—?」

「Chih, how boring. Both of you, there is no need to worry about that sleazebag. You two retreat behind me right away.」

The moment Soffice was tilting her head in puzzlement, a Dragon Voice transmission came from Captain Magialca.

It seemed that she was astill in the middle of battle against Phoenix too, but it looked like she had quite the leeway.

「GUGI.....iOoOoooOOONN!」

The two got taken aback and gasped. At that moment, even more intense creaking could be heard from Deus ex Machina.

That body burst open from inside in no time at all, then it crashed on the ground half-destroyed.

「Just, what in the world.....!?」

『It's simple, that guy's Leviathan has a Divine Raiment to manipulate water—it can also change the water's state freely. Most likely that guy slip in a lot of water inside the enemy's body, and then he vaporized them all in one go.』

「——」

When water was vaporized, the mass would bloat until more than a thousand times.

Using that, Singlen put an absurd steam pressure from inside Deus ex Machina and pulverized it in one go.

Water manipulation seemed like a simple ability in a glance, even so its practical use couldn't be measured.

Singlen had even thoroughly trained tactics using his Divine raiment until the territory of one hit certain kill.

「Soo, his weapon isn't just his Senjin that use tuning. What a troublesome man.....」

「Well, it's fine while he is an ally perhaps.....」

「What are you acting befuddled like that for, you brats, retreat right away. I'm not going to save you two even if you got dragged into that battle you know?」

Singlen turned around and scolded with a haughty tone that was looking down on others as usual.

But, even after getting ordered like that, Rosa and Soffice was bewildered.

「If there is spare strength, we should help that nouveau riche captain. Even like that, she is more or less our leader.」

「Guess soo..... Besides not all the other Ragnarok have died completely.」

Just as Rosa pointed out, the other remaining Ragnarok also hadn't died.

Even though their core had been damaged and they were in the verge of death, they were crawling on the ground toward the fortress using their tenacity.

And then, they were also reluctant to retreat by themselves while leaving behind Magialca who was in the middle of battle against the still unharmed Phoenix.

『—I can hear you two you know, you youngsters.』

A Dragon Voice from Magialca that was vaguely filled with anger flew toward the three, including Singlen.

『No need for worry. Leave behind the remaining Ragnarok and retreat to behind the watch tower. I can't display my full strength with all of you there.』

「.....Seems like that's it. It's better to not force ourselves and let her take care of it yeah.」

「For me it's unsatisfying to be unable to deal the finishing blow thoroughly though.」

Greifer and Mel who arrived at that timing prompted them like that, so Soffice and Rosa began to retreat.

They were acting strong, but in any case their stamina too was already at the limit.

After they circled to behind the watch tower, they linked up with Lux and Aeril who were also ordered by Magialca to return.

「Greifer.....」

「Well, I'll put aside my settlement with you bastard for later. Right now it's defeating those monsters first.」

It seemed something was in Aeril's mind about her betrayal, she was talking hesitatingly, but in contrast Greifer bluntly told her to do it later.

From his attitude, perhaps Greifer had already noticed about Aeril's true feeling since when she became his aide as Coral using perception manipulation.

「Even so they are really obstinate aren't they? Even though they have been given that much damage, not a single one of them has died completely yet—」

「.....」

Lux made a dubious face after hearing Mel muttering beside him.

Six Ragnarok excluding Phoenix were already dying. It was only a matter of time until they crumbled into dust, even so something was strange.

Why were all the Ragnarok gathered into a spot even though they weren't even fighting—.

「Captain Magialca! Be careful! The Ragnarok's movement is strange somehow!」

Lux spoke a warning right away, but Magialca who was fighting on top of the watch tower in front of them raised her voice in annoyance.

「Eei, noisy, you are breaking my concentration. Who cares about the dying Ragnarok. This grilled chicken is annoying.」

Even after receiving innumerable amounts of Phoenix's feathers, Magialca still had strength to spare.

But, Lux was feeling a mysterious anxiety.

In order to assist somehow using Bahamut, he tried to calm his breathing. It was then, Phoenix suddenly retreated and took distance.

All the other Ragnarok was lining up vertically as though forming a queue. Phoenix shook its wings of flame at the lead and came to a stop there.

At the same time, a girl's voice could be heard from the Heaven palace that had descended until nearby.

『I'm beaten. Everyone of the world alliance, as well as Captain Magialca Zen Vanfrick of Seven Dragon Paladins. I Listelka, the representative of the Lord here declared my defeat, and my surrender.』

Lux's surrounding became noisy.

And then, there was a sign that a commotion occurred even inside the fortress.

『I understand that this is a selfish talk after betraying all of you one-sidedly and inflicted so much harm, but I have no other recourse than to do this after our trump card is beaten in this situation. I will surrender Avalon's legacies and my head, so I ask if you all will at least spare the lives of my little sisters?』

The mournful request of Listelka caused the soldiers who were observing the situation in front of the fortress to be bewildered.

They were surely thinking that first they had to ask for the decision from the countries' leaders who were evacuating underground.

『Fumu—that's a laudable attitude. Then in order to save the face of the alliance, there is a necessity to ponder whether to accept that proposal from your side. Lower your altitude slight without showing any strange movement.』

『—Yes. I'm thankful for your generous mercy.』

In a glance, Listelka's attitude looked honest.

However behind it, the girl inside the Heaven Palace that was floating in the air was making a mocking smile.

『.....She is just a mere merchant after all. As a military officer, she is just too dimwitted.』

The remaining Ragnarok that were in the verge of death, but if she gave the command to self-explode in their death, it would produce a terrifying destructive power.

With the self-explosion of the unharmed Phoenix, the remaining six others would be dragged into it and the power of the explosion would rise.

If that happened, not just the watch tower, even the fortress behind it would be annihilated instantly.

Whether it was the representatives of all the countries, the Seven Dragon Paladins, and also Aeril—.

The match hadn't been decided yet.

The chance to turn the table was still in her hand.

Thinking that, Listelka was going to give the self-explosion command to the Ragnarok. It was then, Magialca's voice came.

「Nn? Aah, you can stop around there you know? It's enough distance for firing. —Die. <sup>Scorched Earth Calamity</sup> Hell Tempest.」

Right after that, the gigantic installation type armor that Magialca piloted—Divine Drag-Ride Jormungandr's whole body shined.

A huge magic circle emerged before her eye. A force field whirled like a storm which became a torrent of energy that was liberated at the next moment.

—

—DOooooooOOOGUoOOHN!]

—

A roaring sound that felt like it would break the eardrum was emitted. The after wave assaulted Lux and others which made them feel as though they were punched.

The roar of that overwhelming destructive power blew away not just Phoenix that was remaining at the front, but also the other six dying Ragnarok—and also even the old castle that was far behind them, annihilating them all.

「No, way....., such thing.....!?」

The voice of Listelka muttered dumbfounded. It expressed agitation for the first time.

Heaven Palace took evasive action just before that, but it was seriously damaged just by the after wave, and broken transmissions sound could be heard.

「Kukukuku..... Trying to trick me for the second time, it's still ten years too early for you little girl.」

Magialca who was sporting a wicked smile readied the seven armored arms of Jormungandr and loudly spoke.

Lux and others didn't understand what happened at all. Beside them, Singlen made an arrogant smile.

「Jormungandr's Divine Raiment, Hell Tempest converted a part of the damage it received into its own energy and stock it. That energy can be used to enhance all sorts of attack ability. That woman took position on the watch tower was to expose herself to become enemy target.」

「-.....!？」

Lux who became aware of that Divine Raiment for the first time noticed Magialca's scheme and became speechless.

She had calculated it from the beginning.

Even though she possessed installation type Divine Drag-Ride that couldn't move from its spot, she intentionally took position above the watch tower where she could be targeted easily.

While Lux and others were fighting, she was continuing to get hit with flame all that time, everything was to stock up energy with Jormungandr's Divine Raiment to be used to consign the Ragnarok into oblivion with one attack.

「And then, because the enemy is the Lord, she also saw through the possibility that this ability is known by them. She deliberately pretend to accept Listelka's negotiation before firing.....was it like that？」

Magialca herself answered back at the question from Soffice who couldn't hide her shaken feeling.

「That sound's bad to be heard by other people. I was only seeing through the enemy's strategy. After all just like how Iblis exploded previously, it looked like she was gathering all the dying Ragnarok to blow us up. Thanks to her gathering them all in one spot, it saved the effort.」

「.....」

Lux too thought that Magialca's prediction was correct.



In any case, the Heaven Palace was seriously damaged, and he thought whether the battle against the Lord was settled with this.

「——」

Mishis wearing Divine Drag-Ride Azi Dahaka could be seen leaping down from the burning Heaven Palace, and then she skated on the ground that had become burnt field.

Without stopping she started escaping in order to hide in the rubbles of the old castle.

「Planning to escape and hide huh? Well, that's understandable. As expected in this situation—」

Greifer sighed 'fuu' and let those words slipped out. Right after that, angry yells rose from the fortress behind.

「Running away after this doing this much, don't screw around! Don't let them escape!」

The Drag-Knights of world alliance who were retreating into the fortress behind.

They fell into Listelka's trap and suffered damage, but there were dozens of Wyvern users who were relatively unharmed chasing after the Lord altogether.

It was unknown whether it was the command of the countries' representatives, or their personal decision, but it was undoubtedly an unforeseen action.

「Stop! Right now the priority is to reorganize our force! Either way there is no meaning in pursuing them!」

Magialca who was still wearing her armor gave such instruction, but several Drag-Knights didn't stop from anger and excitement.

They were gathered here as the elite force, but they fell into trap and a lot of their comrades were killed.

Surely for them there was no option to let go of the chance for revenge that suddenly descended before their eyes.

「They aren't listening to order only at this kind of time. Even though they just got saved from getting that severely harmed.」

At the side, Mel let out a sigh, while Greifer muttered with his hand supporting his chin.

「However, in reality the enemy is also in dire strait ain't it? If they are pursued in this situation—」

Lux also agreed with the two's opinion.

It was dangerous to carelessly step inside the enemy's camp, but Mishis was also carrying Listelka. Both her hands were occupied. If they could catch up to the enemy and surrounded them, then perhaps...

The moment Lux thought that, Aeril raised her voice beside him.

「This is bad! If we don't pull them back quickly—! That guy is coming!」

「.....That guy?」

At that time when Lux asked back, *thump* his heart pounded.

His blood flow roared inside, his eardrum shook, and his consciousness was wrapped in darkness.

Instantly—Lux saw it along with a hallucination as thought the time stopped.

A jet black large dragon standing in the way of seven Wyvern users.

With a loose movement that was waiting for the enemy, the figure of Fugil Arcadia took a stance to intercept them.

His spine froze.

The special move that he used a lot in that day of revolution, and he also polished up in the tournament after that.

(Quick.....Shot)

「—Reload on Fire」

Right after Fugil muttered, the sword he readied danced to every direction.

The seven Drag-Rides leaping from all directions simultaneously, their armors and weapons were instantly cut apart and crumbled.

A trampling down act from the consecutive slashes that were unleashed from the compression strengthening of time.

But, what was decisively different from Lux was the location where that sword tip slid through.

Fugil's sword didn't ran to vital spots of Drag-Rides like Force Core, armored wrist, or Sword Device, but to the riders' heart, neck, side, and thigh, deeply carving lethal wound for them.

In just an instant, seven elite Drag-Knights met violent death. Without moving Fugil kept hovering in the air, blocking the path forward.

It was a stance to prevent pursuit toward Mishis who was escaping while carrying Listelka, but it also could be seen as though he was displaying his own majestic appearance.

「Why—」

But, words slipped out from Lux's mouth earlier than he could grasp that situation.

「How does Fugil, has Bahamut in his possession!?」

He didn't understand.

Divine Drag-Ride wasn't like general purpose Drag-Rides that were created in many number, only one Divine Drag-Ride should be able to exist for each of them.

Niddhog and Azi Dahaka were also recreated, but it was possible only after the old one was completely destroyed.

Even though Lux possessed the current Bahamut, why—.

「We must not approach him carelessly..... The Uroboros that man possessed is.....!」

When Lux was thinking like that, Aeril squeezed out a trembling voice.

For some reason it felt like he had that Drag-Ride's name even though this should be his first time hearing it.

rcle of Transmigration  
Infinity.....One of the special armaments that Uroboros has, can take the

form of every Divine Drag-Ride.]

「What did you say.....!？」

Greifer raised a stiff voice, furthermore the remaining Seven Dragon Paladins also made a grave look.

If Aeril's words were the truth, there would be no ability that was more terrifying than that.

An ability that originally should be impossible even for Divine Raiment was possessed by a special armament—was that the thing that was called Uroboros?

「Uh, gu.....a」

But, something that wasn't a simple threat was making the alarm inside Lux's head to ring out loudly.

Static that was like sandstorm appeared inside his brain, and he could hear a sound along with pain.

—

『Then, three more days. Just as you instructed, I'll come here again. Decide your answer clearly before that. Will you cooperate using Wyvern together with my Bahamut? Or else—』

—

(Then don't tell me, the one who destroyed all the Drag-Knights of the empire was.....no wrong! There is no way that's true! I definitely, carried that out with my own will! The one who did that, should also be me!)

He also had the memory of cutting down the Drag-Knights of the old empire remaining in his head. It wasn't an illusion or dream by all means.

Lux shook his head and shook himself free from the distorted vision.

In that time Mishis leaped to the back and vanished behind the shadow of the old castle's rubble.

『Circle of Life and Death Recurrence  
Infinity, Zero One, Endless....., within the two special armaments and one Divine Raiment, the knowledge that I obtained is only that. I too don't

know that man's true identity. However, if we are to fight him, it will be dangerous unless all of us clash against him.....!」

Aeril was a skilled Drag-Knight with skill that was equal with Seven Dragon Paladins.

Regardless of that, she showed so strong wariness like this. Fugil's true strength could be surmised from that.

「Uroboros.....so that's the Divine Drag-Ride of that silent guy—but, he was formerly the first imperial prince of the destroyed old empire right? I don't think he is that terrifying of an opponent though.」(TN: In the raw, the word that Greifer use to say silent guy was to imply of farting without a sound)

「.....」

He didn't understand.

In Lux's memory, Fugil definitely gave him advice about Drag-Ride, but he had never seen Fugil himself riding a Drag-Ride even once—that should be how it was.

(Not even once? Is that really true? That day, in that day of revolution, what did I—)

The uncomfortable feeling of something unknown caressed his back. Lux pressed his hand on his forehead.

What was this memory fragments that he was seeing starting from a certain day?

Was it an illusion that Lux was seeing because of extreme trauma, or else—.

「—Fu」

Fugil left behind a smile and vanished. Right after that, the atmosphere in front of the fortress relaxed, and sighs leaked out from the soldiers.

「Either way we are also retreating now. The deep level floor of Avalon is still remaining right?」

「Yes. If my information is correct, there is no doubt about that. No—moreover if the gate to the deep level floor is opened, no one should be

able to enter inside before a whole three days passed.]

Aeril who was questioned by Aeril muttered hesitantly.

「You said that, but you ain't scheming to trick us again right?」

「Of course, I'll ask for scout to be dispatched to confirm the situation. After all I completely cannot ask you all to believe in my words.」

Aeril immediately replied to Greifer's words of suspicion.

Because it was a fact that she had deceived them once and even launched surprise attack out of nowhere, she was resolved to be doubted like that.

But, Lux was convinced that Aeril was saying the truth.

Scout would be sent, and if it was the fact that the gate to the deep level floor of Avalon wasn't opened, they would have to wait for three days.

During that time they had to make their preparation as much as possible.

After all it would only be a simple competition and scramble after that.

Would they be able to stop the destruction of this world by Sacred Eclipse and controlled Avalon?

Or perhaps would Avalon be stolen by Listelka and others the Lord?

The time for the answer of that was approaching near.

# Epilogue – The Young Man’s Collar

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After the Lords retreated, the battle ceased for the moment.

Half a day after that. The situation was in high alert, White Ridge knight order of Blackend Kingdom was always keeping guard without pause.

The old castle was destroyed and there was nothing in the destroyed site, there was only the faint light of magic circle reaching up like a pillar.

After Lux escaped from the underground together with Aeril, it seemed the preparation to open the gate was progressing steadily.

Listelka and her group lost their base and took flight, it wasn’t that far from underground the destroyed old castle, proving that Aeril’s information was correct.

On the other hand, because of the strenuous effort of Lux and others, the Seven Dragon Paladins that splendidly crushed the revived seven Ragnarok, the fortress that Magialca created as their base was still barely safe.

But, there wouldn’t be the next time.

They had gathered all the remaining war potential in this place. The next time they clashed, the conclusion would be reached.

Lisha and others who pushed down their fatigue and rushed here had also reached their limit since a long time ago. Because of that they along with Lux were ordered to rest.

It should be hard to recover their stamina in three days, even so the world alliance surely would have to rely on them.

The remaining enemy was the Lord’s leader, the first imperial princess Listelka, her maid Mishis, Fugil, and then Hayes, only those four.

After them was only the existence of Sacred Eclipse as an uncertain factor.

After having discussion with Queen Raffi and Prime Minister Nulph, and having a light talk with the members of Syvalles, Lux headed to the fortress's underground following Magialca's instruction.

There was the figure of Aeril there, inside a prison that was heavily locked.

「I brought dinner here, Aeril.」

「Thank you, Lux-kun.」

Aeril's both hands were shackled, and her feet were also linked with a chain.

She was wearing her pilot suit, but the sword belt of her Sword Device was taken from her.

It was a simple prison with only a single bed and a tallow lamp.

She was treated like a prisoner or hostage, even so Aeril was smiling.

「This is strange, our position now is reversed from just a little while ago isn't it?」

「Sorry. I had asked Captain Magialca so you can at least be let out from the prison though.」

Aeril smiled wryly. In respond Lux bowed his head with a serious face.

But, the girl before his eyes didn't even look like she took offense by her situation. She put her arms that were shackled on the bed and prompted Lux to sit down.

「No. I thought it would be understandable even if I'm killed, so even this is already more than enough. I'm thankful to Lux-kun, Captain Magialca, as well as the kings of each country.」

In fact, it was just as Aeril said.

In the recognition of the world alliance, to begin with Aeril came to this battlefield to trick the Seven Dragon Paladins and captured them.

Concerning the result, a lot of casualties came out from Listelka's scheme, but it was unthinkable that it could be used as an excuse to pardon Aeril.

But, Magialka listened to the circumstance from Lux, and she would talk to the world alliance with the direction of persuading them in regard to the matter of Aeril.

The biggest reason she would do that was because of the high possibility that Aeril herself would have the most important role in the capture of the remaining Avalon.

Thus if Aeril contributed to the capture of Avalon and made an accomplishment, it might be possible that in the end she would be given amnesty and allowed to live.

She was on a thin ice—no, it might be simply a front, but there was no other method to save her than that.

In that case Lux too should focus all his strength in that direction.

Although, heavy restriction and monitoring were necessary, so she was locked in a prison like this.

Lux was chosen to watch over here as the person closest to her.

「Then, let's start eating. Although I cannot unlock your shackle because I was told that it's not allowed.」

「Could it be, you will feed me then?」

Aeril asked mischievously along with a smile that looked happy.

Lux was taken aback that she was teasing him in this situation. Lured by that, Lux also smiled.

But actually Aeril's consideration must be included in that because she didn't want to make Lux feel bad.

When Lux scooped up the stew with a spoon and brought it to her mouth, Aeril's cheeks loosened up in enjoyment.

「Mm, delicious. This might be my first time being feed like this.」

When Lux once more saw such face of Aeril from the side, he thought that she was a really lovely girl.

Because of her mission as a Lord, Lux first became acquainted with her as a

male friend, and she saved him and others many times in battle from the shadow.

If their position and meeting weren't like this, he wondered how it would become for them around this time.

He was suddenly thinking of such thing.

「You know, in three more days when we departed it will be fine if you also put a collar on me.」

When the girl in front of him said that jokingly, Lux took a deep breath and peered into her eyes.

The branching of enemy or ally by the mischief of fate.

Even so, she was aiming for peace not because of her mission, but because she was thinking about the future of this very world itself.

That was why,

「Aeril won't betray us anymore right? You will be our ally right? Then, it'll be fine if you swear that and shake hand for it. That will be the collar that I put on you.」

「.....Got it. I swear.」

Aeril was flabbergasted by Lux's words, but before long she smiled softly and took Lux's hand.

The skin texture of her hand was smooth, and it felt pleasant just from holding it.

The destiny between the Lord and the family of traitor for a long time.

He felt happy that even such thing could be surmounted with a single feeling.

When Lux was keenly basking in sentimentality, Aeril suddenly brought her face close.

「Then, it will be night soon, so can I ask you to change my clothes for me? That's, it's embarrassing but.....it's fine you know? If it's Lux-kun then—」

「EEEEEEEEEH!?」

If he had to help Aeril to take off her pilot suit right now and made her changed into sleepwear, that meant it would be necessary to make her got naked.

He borrowed the key for her shackles before coming here, so there would be no problem in that front, but it was necessary to ask someone else for help.

(Airi.....it feels like I will get scolded if I ask her for help. Or rather, in the first place is it fine for me to do this!?) Seeing the captivating face of Aeril who was averting her gaze with blushing cheeks, he unconsciously gulped. In that moment—footsteps were approaching from behind.

「Wait a second! Just what are you doing you prisoneeerrrr! There is no way it's fine to go that far! Get away from Lux!」

「We really have to be constantly on our guard with you aren't we? You are also feigning an open attitude in a sense, so it's troublesome.」

Lisha and Krulcifer spoke doggedly,

「Lu-chan. I'm also sleepy, so help me change.」

「Why does it become like that!? Such act is not permitted in this base! It's imprudent!」

Philuffy who was yawning sleepily, and Celis who retorted with bright red face.

「As for me, I welcome it. Rather if I'm also allowed to help—」

「Yoruka-san please get out! You are just making this place even more chaotic! Nii-san too! What happened with the pact!？」

「Eerr. I have heard about that pact but, I'm an outsider so it's irrelevant for me.」

「.....」

Aeril stated that with a refreshing smile. Everyone else who was present there was completely dumbfounded.

The Triad who came rushing the last from behind sighed in amazement.

「How should I say it, she is really bold.」



「Yes. I even feel admiration instead.」

「Theeen, Lisha-sama. Do you recognize that she isn't included in the pact?」

When Tillfur stirred Lisha up like that, she took a really deep breath, and then raised her voice without hesitation.

「As the princess of the new kingdom, I won't tolerate anyone stealing a march like that! Aeril! I'll have you to enter it too! Into our pact that is!」

「Suddenly it feels like the status of the new kingdom's royalty is going down though.....?」

Ignoring Krulcifer's retort, Tillfur also got greatly heated up.

「Now you are talking! Yooosh, Aeril.....chan? Write your name here and seal it with your blood!」

The cold underground prison in the fortress instantly turned heated up and noisy.

# Afterword

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Long time no see, this is Akatsuki Senri. (The space for afterword this time is tight so it's compressed) Recently I have become mostly used with the buzzing in my ears that is from unknown cause (Is it fine like this?). I'll go to the nearby doctor if my condition is worsening, but because I'm really in a jam, I won't be able to get a check up for at least a week.

However, most things will be cured if I stay in bed for a week, so even if I got for a check up, at that time it will be mostly resolved. It will be great if I can predict sickness a week before it though.

But even if I can do that, perhaps I'll say 『Even though I'm not even going to become completely sick, I've got no time to sleep!』 and do other thing then. I can feel envious to the summer holiday of student days.

By the way, inside this work it is still the beginning of the year, but in the real world it looks like the four seasons will soon finish going in a circle.

The Seven Dragon Paladins arc that started from volume six will also rush into the climax, but from here there are still several mountains remaining, so I'll be happy if you readers can accompany the activity of Lux and co.

Well then, I pray that we will be able to meet again in the next volume.